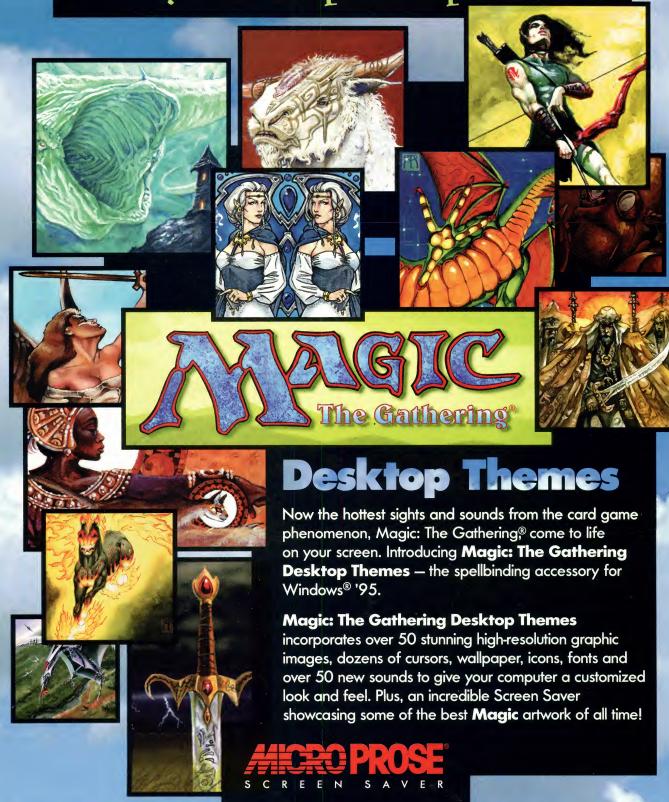


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THE ULTIMATE KILLER DECK!





FEBRUARY 1996

Inside the İndustry

10 INSIDER TRADING

by Mark Rosewater Our player-turned-informant leaks the latest Magic[™] news to the public. Backgrounds by Amy Weber

15 WOTC NEWS

by Jenny Scott

The Duelist updates you on the recent reorganization at WotC and its effect on the different product lines.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber; spot illustrations by Julie Baroh and Ron Spencer

19 REPORTS ON TRADING CARD GAMES

compiled by Allen Varney The good, the bad, and the licensed: here's what's coming in '96. Backgrounds and spot illustrations by Scott Kirschner

22 MASTER OF MAYHEM

by Jeff J. Lin Meet Robin D. Laws, Hong Kong action-flick fan and co-designer of Shadowfist TM.

Background by Scott Kirschner; photo by Jim Rankin

Tetrunner

24 NETRUNNER FROM THE OUTSIDE IN by Rob Heinsoo

This Shadowfist developer shares his first impressions of the latest Deckmaster game.

Backgrounds and spot illustrations by Anson Maddocks

28 THE ART OF NETRUNNER: PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes Take a behind-the-scenes look at the process and people involved in illustrating the newest Deckmaster game. Backgrounds by Mark Tedin;

spot illustrations by Anson Maddocks

EXPERT ADVICE

33 CHRONICLES FAQ

compiled by Marc Schmalz Learn why Chronicles was printed and how to get the Rabid Wombat soundbite.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber; spot illustrations by Doug Keith

36 HOMELANDS FAQ

compiled by Charlie Catino, Christopher Ferris, and Marc Schmalz Here's everything you wanted to know about Homelands™ (and weren't afraid to ask). Backgrounds by Amy Weber; spot illustrations by Scott Kirschner

38 CARD SPOTLIGHT

by Chris Page Get the most out of your Magic army with Dwarven Warriors. Backgrounds by Amy Weber

42 Excuse Me, Mr. Suitcase?

by Paul Peterson

Get your new Magic expansion cards out of the suitcase and into play. Backgrounds by Julie Baroh and Amy Weber; spot illustration by Julie Baroh

44 STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

by Mark Rosewater Stop random deck-building; put the right number of a card in your deck. Backgrounds by David Kimmel

49 READ 'EM LIKE A BOOK

by Zak Dolan

Magic expert Zak Dolan shows how you can read your opponent's deck to get the most out of your strategy. Backgrounds and spot illustration by Drew Tucker

52 THE ALICE EFFECT

by Beth Moursund Want to expand your Magic game? Try thinking about your cards as cards. Backgrounds by David Kimmel

56 WOTC PICKS

compiled by Melody Alder Get new card combos, as well as some classic ones, from the experts at Wizards of the Coast.

Backgrounds by David Kimmel

Want to find out how you can win a trip to the next Pro Tournament? SEE OUR CONTEST ON PAGE 12!

58 House Rules

from our readers

Here are five new variants for Magic: The Gathering, including one by the former Magic World Champion. Backgrounds by David Kimmel

60 Magic Rulings & Errata

compiled by Tom Wylie Stop wondering; get the latest Magic rulings while they're hot. Backgrounds by Sandra Everingham

64 MURK DWELLERS

by Tom Wylie

This issue: a special pull-out poster on timing.

Backgrounds by Drew Tucker; spot illustration by Scott Kirschner

THE WORLD OF Dominia

68 From the Library of Leng: **AUTUMN WILLOW**

by Scott Hungerford, Margaret Organ-Kean, William Jockusch, and Melody Alder In this new feature for The Duelist

we've highlighted Autumn Willow, a major character in the struggle for the Homelands.

Backgrounds by Daniel Gelon

Tournament News

70 WIZARDS OF THE COAST INTRODUCES PROFESSIONAL **TOURNAMENT CIRCUIT**

by Jeff J. Lin

Read all about the Magic Pro Tour and get profiles on some of the top contenders.

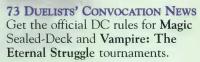
Backgrounds by Drew Tucker and Amy Weber; spot illustration by Kaja Foglio

72 WIZARDS OF THE COAST'S EXPERIMENTAL TOURNAMENT SYSTEM

created by the Magic R&D team; compiled by Rich McGatha and Mark Rosewater Help WotC R&D test out these rules for a new, point-based deckconstruction system.

Background by Drew Tucker and Amy Weber; spot illustration by Kaja Foglio





Backgrounds by Amy Weber; spot illustrations by William O'Connor

PROFILES

79 THE DUELIST INTERVIEWS RANDY GALLEGOS

by Jenny Scott and Amy Weber Artist Randy Gallegos shares his inspirations for his work and reflects on what it means to be a Christian in the world of fantasy art.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber; photos by John Lee

84 Divided We Stand: Magic IN Dallas

by Jeff J. Lin

Magic players in the Dallas area show their devotion to the game. Plus, Chip Hogan tells what it's like to be a professional Magic player.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber; photos by J.D. Talasek

Vampire: The Eternal Struggle

88 WHISPERS FROM THE ELYSIUM

by Shawn F. Carnes

Listen in as one of the designers of *Dark Sovereigns* unmasks the latest in the world of V:TES.

Background and full-page illustration by Randy Gallegos

91 V:TES RULINGS & ERRATA

compiled by Tom Wylie

Find out about non-Camarilla vampires and Brujah Frenzy in this installment of V:TES rulings.

Background by Randy Gallegos

92 KINDRED INTELLIGENCE: KILLER COMBOS FOR V:TES

by Andrew Finch and Tom Wylie
Finally—favorite card combinations
from V:TES and Dark Sovereigns.
Background by Ron Spencer

Reviews And Commentary

93 MIDDLE-EARTH: THE WIZARDS

reviewed by Rick Swan
Tolkien is not rolling over in his grave
with Middle-earth: The Wizards;
plus, a note from John W. Curtis III
of the METW design team about
card rarities.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber

96 A FORCED EFFORT: STAR WARS CUSTOMIZABLE CARD GAME

a review by Allen Varney What can we say? "Stay on target." Plus, designer's notes from Tom Braunlich, co-designer of the Star Wars CCG.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber

100 CAPSULE REVIEWS

by Allen Varney and Wolfgang Baur Get reviews from the experts on two new TCGs—Legend of the Five Rings and The Crow.

Background by Amy Weber; spot illustration by Quinton Hoover

102 THE DIVINER

by J. M. White
The TCG market for 1996: the best
of times or the worst?
Backgrounds by Amy Weber;
spot illustration by Dan Frazier

104 LOST IN THE SHUFFLE

by Richard Garfield
Game designer Richard Garfield
muses on the role of ritual in gaming.
Backgrounds by Doug Keith

106 What's New? WITH PHIL AND DIXIE

Get to the roots of cyberspace. *Everything by Phil Foglio*

Puzzles

108 MAGIC: THE PUZZLING

by Mark Rosewater
The puzzle guy presents three new puzzles, including a new "unscrambling" of Magic cards.

Backgrounds by Anthony Petrarca

116 MAGIC TRICKS

by Mark Rosewater
You can stop racking your brain now; here are solutions to last issue's puzzles.

Backgrounds by Drew Tucker

Last Words

124 Your Turn

from our readers
Hear readers' responses to
Chronicles, and give your opinion on the DC's Banned and
Restricted Lists.

Backgrounds by Amy Weber; spot illustrations by Margaret Organ-Kean

128 On the Trail of the Throat Wolf

by Mike Selinker Check out the diary of a mad reporter as he seeks the ever-elusive Throat Wolf.

Background by Amy Weber; spot illustration by Ron Spencer

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DUELIST

Background by Amy Weber



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The Duelist

Vol. 3, Issue 1

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Amy Weber would like to thank all the illustrators and designers who've worked on *The Duelist* for meeting insane deadlines, producing exceptional work, and helping to make the last two years easier; and the entire *Duelist* staff, with a special thank you to Captain Kathyn for being an inspiration and a pleasure to work with—good luck on issue #10.

And *The Duelist* gang would like to give a special thanks to Amy, for her spirit, her earing, her integrity, and her art. From the whole crew to our Chief Engineer: happy Voyages—through the belt of Orion, and beyond. May you always keep reaching for the moons...

This issue brought to you by: The Conspiracy Museum, the Second Gunman, and the Grassy Knoll; The Village Stompers; wind storms, winter vacations, "off-sites," and sick editors; stink; Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee; Pru...nellal; Son Volt; Sebadoh; Jonathan Richman; Spy by Night (coming to Seattle soon!); Rat Man and The Duelist's Bad Boy; and the Big Red M&M Guy.

Duelist #9 is dedicated to all of our friends and former co-workers who have moved on to other jobs and new dreams, and who continue to be an inspiration to us all. by Kathryn Haines

Lo, These Many Moons..

started working at Wizards of the Coast in "the basement days"-back in October 1993, when the company had about ten employees and we still accepted direct-mail orders for Magic™. At that time, The Duelist was going to be the quarterly, full-color newsletter for the Duelists' Convocation—a project I was supposed to finish up in about a month so I could get on to my real tasks: putting out "The Apothecary" (Cryptych readers, remember that?) and editing the next supplement for Talislanta[™]. After all, back then Wizards of the Coast was a small roleplaying game company with a name taken straight from a roleplaying campaign.

Well, I never edited anything for Talislanta, and it took a little more than a month for Jesper Myrfors and me to put out the first issue of The Duelist. But it wasn't until mid-December-when Wizards of the Coast decided to cut several product lines and let go over thirty employees in an effort to concentrate on Deckmaster™ games and reduce overhead-that I couldn't help but admit that I didn't work for that same small roleplaying company anymore. Let's face it: for the most part, RPGs are best developed by small companies who can focus exclusively on that type of product, companies that are willing to accept small staffs, slower growth, and smaller profit margins in order for the product to develop. And let's face it: WotC RPGs, like RPGs in general, have struggled to earn the attention needed to make their products successful in a market gripped by a game phenomenon that even D&D's initial boom couldn't have rivaled. I've heard it said, many times, that WotC's decision to refocus on its "core competencies" was a good one-that may be largely true. But I'd rather not try to reconcile the vision which this decision reflects with the more altruistic, if smaller, outlook on the industry which I absorbed from my first days at WotC. Wizards is a different company now; not all bets are off, but a lot have been settled-and the stakes are a lot higher now.

Certainly V:TES[™], Netrunner[™], and the Deckmaster brand as a whole will benefit from the serious treatment they're now receiving, which is all to the good. So will *The Duelist*. And, like the rest of the teams at Wizards of the Coast, all of which were affected by the layoffs in some way,

The Duelist is tightening its belt. With this issue, we've switched to a more efficient page size and adjusted our cover price to compensate for ever-increasing paper prices. We hope these changes will ensure that we'll keep delivering a high-quality magazine, a magazine we hope to be producing monthly in the second half of this year.

But I'm not quite sure how we're going to do it without Amy. Earlier in December Amy Weber decided to leave Wizards of the Coast and pursue her freelance art career. *The Duelist's* art director since the summer of 1994, Amy has been the pillar upon which the look and the personality of the magazine has rested for more than a year and a half.

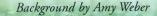
I've become very familiar with what she calls her "art director's smile"—a look something between a laugh and a warning with which she greets my latest last-minute change in plan. It's a look which reminds me how very lucky I've been to work with an art director as inventive and as patient with my hair-brained schemes as Amy has been.

I remember that look from our first project together, *The Duelist Supplement* [the special issue of the magazine which came out in May 1994, between *Duelist* #1 and *Duelist* #2]. It was around 11 P.M. the night before we were going to run film when I suggested (with my typical timing) that, as the backdrop for our page numbers, we should use different phases of the moon. Twelve hours before film time isn't the moment to be adding new design elements, but Amy pulled it off, as she has since—mastermind of that series of daily miracles that gets *The Duelist* out the door.

Under Amy's influence, a fledgling magazine has been transformed into an elegant and beautifully presented publication which continues to set the graphic standard for every other adventure game magazine. And no wonder; for no one I know stands up more firmly and fiercely for her beliefs than Amy, who is known not only for her vital and distinctive illustration style, but for her passionate championing of artists and their concerns. Amy Weber has taught me more about respect and integrity than anyone I have ever known.

I love *The Duelist* and I believe in the possibilities of **Deckmaster**; but I will miss the old WotC, and especially Amy.









Comments? Questions?
Send them to: Letters c/o The Duelist
P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057
or via email to: duelist@wizards.com

Please include name and phone number for verification purposes. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

L.A.(ME)?

he "Planeswalking in La-La Land" article from Duelist #8 had some of us fuming here in the Chicago area. You need to be very careful when saying, "The Southern California region's playing environment has produced a number of original deck ideas," giving the impression that these decks were the sole creation of the L.A. area and anyone else who has them copied them. To be more precise, the L.A. area has a massive amount of DC tourneys, so these decks get spotlighted early on. To say that a "recursive" Triskelion deck was "created" in one place is simply silly. I've had such a deck of my own creation for longer than a year, and I realized the power of the card from the second time I saw it. The same holds true for most deck types. This isn't to take anything away from people who develop these decks, but given a finite number of cards (though growing month by month), the same ideas are bound to develop in different places. Since Chicago has very few sanctioned tourneys (like, I think, one in the last, oh, six months), there is absolutely no single deck type that dominates.

My point in all this is that (1) people in different areas come up with both different and similar decks and (2) we in Chicago need more DC tourneys, but there is very little incentive for stores to run them. (They run their own tourneys which tend to be free and a lot of fun.) For those in the Chicagoland area, drop me some email if you're interested in more sanctioned tournaments; there's a group of us getting together to address the lack of sanctioned tourneys in the area.

Ken Roth Gryfalia@tesser.com I was reading *Duelist* #8, and I came across the article on Los Angeles. To put it mildly, I was shocked and infuriated. There are other places to play **Magic**™ other than Los Angeles. I am currently residing in Huntsville, Alabama, and it has some of the most expansive collections of **Magic** cards in the country. Huntsville only has about 200,000 residents, yet cards sell generally for 10–25 percent below *Scrye* and *Inquest*'s lowest prices for rares. Plus uncommons usually only sell for \$.25–\$1.00. Commons, of course, sell for a nickel each. Stores in Huntsville can charge lower prices because Huntsville got nearly the same size shipments of cards for the first two years as L.A. did. Quite honestly, you can trade quite reasonably for **Magic** cards in Huntsville, anything from Alphas to *Homelands*™.

I would love for anyone from L.A. to come to Huntsville and compete with us. Contact Dr. Bob's at (205) 880-3726 or White Mountain at (205) 830-9597; we'll help you get a place to stay and make sure we set you up with some southern hospitality, **Magic** style. I know for a fact I would like to play some of you.

Jason "House" Arnold White Mountain Gaming

Mark Rosewater responds:

It was never my intention to imply that the decks in "Planes-walking in La-La Land" were unique to L.A. The decks mentioned were simply those that had been popular at one time or another in the deck evolution of the Los Angeles Magic community. Obviously, similar ideas with similar decks were experimented with across the country. It was my hope that by listing what deck types were popular in Los Angeles, players from other areas could identify the similarities and see the common bond that all Magic players share.

We'd like to add:

Our recent feature on the L.A. Magic scene was intended to be the first of a series of articles featuring different Magic communities—a fact we obviously didn't make clear. We know that there are many hotbeds of Magic play around the world, so look for your area to be featured in an upcoming issue!

TOM WYLIE TO ISSUE ERRATA ON INDEX

n "A Wizards of the Coast Index" in issue #8, you state that there were four creatures in **Magic** that don't tap when they attack, but there are actually five: Serra Angel, Zephyr Falcon, Rabid Wombat, Ghost Hounds, and Yotian Soldier.

Gavin Ferguson Davenport, IA

Number of creatures inadvertently left off the list: 3; number of readers who wrote in to let us know about this: 7. (We also inadvertently left out two other creatures that don't tap when they attack: Windseeker Centaur and Bartel Runeaxe.) Thanks for pointing this out.

Background by Quinton Hoover



ssue #8 of *The Duelist* is the best yet. I like the new arrangement of articles and columns; it makes it easier to find what I'm looking for. I especially appreciated the enclosed *Complete Magic: The Gathering Card List.* I've been hoping for something like that for quite a while now.

I do have some comments/criticisms on the article "And Now for Something Completely Different." Let me start by saying that $Homelands^{TM}$ is my favorite expansion yet. The rich backstory really drew me into the expansion. However, I do take issue with some points that Charlie Catino raised.

Creatureless decks: While a 4/4 creature isn't something to sneeze at, I wouldn't necessarily call Autumn Willow "nasty." As a legend, only one can be in play at a time. And while she can't be destroyed with Swords to Plowshares, Desert Twister, Terror, etc., she can (if my understanding of the rules is correct) be affected by Dry Spell, Sandstorm, Earthquake, Pyroclasm, and Wrath of God, as none of these spells are targeted.

Artifact decks: While Joven does have uses, any deck built to handle artifacts will already have Shatter, Shatterstorm, Crumble, Rust, Divine Offering, Disenchant, Curse Artifact, or Warp Artifact. Mr. Catino should have mentioned that Joven's main advantage over these spells is that he's reusable.

Poison decks: I agree that it was high time for a card like Leeches. I don't know how prevalent poison decks are, but Leeches deserves a place in every sideboard, right next to Primal Order.

> Scott Steubing Houston, TX KryptoPup@aol.com

Charlie Catino responds:

You are correct that non-targeted spells (such as Dry Spell, Sandstorm, and Wrath of God) do affect Autumn Willow; however, most of these don't kill it. And remember that if you're playing a creatureless deck and your opponent plays Autumn Willow, even if you are at 20 life, you only have 5 turns before Autumn Willow kills you, and you had better play Wrath of God or Earthquake darn quick. Autumn Willow is strong against creatureless decks because most creature-elimination cards players use (e.g., Lightning Bolt, Fireball, Terror, and Swords to Plowshares) don't affect Autumn Willow. It isn't invulnerable, but it can cause these decks real problems.

Also, you're right in pointing out that Joven's main advantage is that it's reusable. This is part of why artifact decks have something new to contend with; if decks with a lot of artifacts can't get rid of Joven, it takes just a few turns for Joven to get rid of all the opponent's artifacts. It is also true that most decks have other ways of getting rid of artifacts; however, most of those are narrow. All the anti-artifact cards you mentioned (except Disenchant) don't

affect anything except artifacts, while Joven can destroy artifacts and is also a 3/3 creature. Good cards are ones that are flexible in that they have more than one use.

Finally, regarding Leeches, I think you may have overestimated its usefulness. It's probably most useful in a poison deck, where you can use it to deal 6 or 8 damage to your opponent when all your little poison creatures have been killed. Leeches really shouldn't be in a serious sideboard until we start producing poison creatures with some bite. If a deck can't defeat a poison deck without Leeches, it definitely needs some work.

DIXIE REVEALED

ne of the first things I read in *The Duelist* is the cartoon featuring Phil and Dixie by Phil Foglio. I am curious to know if Phil and Dixie look like their comic representations, and who exactly is Dixie?

lovebom559@aol.com

Phil Foglio responds:

Who is Dixie? Dixie is an embodiment of everything I found interesting about women, which meant that when I first created the character, there was no single role model, per se. In the intervening years, I did find someone who embodied those traits, characteristics, and measurements, so I married her. So if Dixie is anyone, she's my wife, Kaja.

DUELIST AND OTHER TCGs

'm curious on the feedback you're getting. Do most people want to see other collectable card games reviewed in *The Duelist* or would they rather see you stick to **Magic** and **V:TES**TM? I always skipped through the "other card game" sections and found them annoying, but when I saw a **Star Wars** CCG crop up at one of my favorite stores, I didn't want to buy until I read a review...argh. (By the way, has anyone there looked at it at all?) The cards may be pretty and the names and pictures familiar, but that doesn't make for game play.... Look at **ST:CCG**TM. Thanks again, and I'm looking forward to the next several issues.

Jeff Foley jjfoley@mit.edu

As you've probably already figured out, Allen Varney is reviewing Star WarsTM (in a fashion) in this issue. But you've raised a really important issue—how much should we cover other games? We are a DeckmasterTM magazine first (Magic, V:TES, and NetrunnerTM), but we want to cover the games you want to play. Would you want to read a strategy article on ShadowfistTM or GuardiansTM? Or should we stick to what we know best? As they say, inquiring minds want to know.

Background by Quinton Hoover

Insider Trading:

Mark Rosewater Risks His Job To Reveal Magic's Future

Okay, here's the deal: Kathryn, the editor of this fine magazine, assigned me to write this column in which I'm supposed to report on what's happening in the world of Magic: The Gathering[®]. Having spent my early Magic years scrambling for any good inside dirt, I realized that this was my chance to let my fellow players know what's really going on. I don't know what kind of trouble I'm getting myself into, but at least I'll be doing it for a good cause. Anyway, here's what I know:

UP AND COMING

When's the next expansion, and what is it? Named *Alliances*[™], this late spring/early summer release will be a limited-edition expansion with over 140 cards. From the designers of *Ice Age*[™], *Alliances* will continue to explore the lives of the inhabitants of the thawing continent of Terisiare. Take it from one of the set's developers: this is an expansion not to be missed! For example, there is one card that will be compared to both Ancestral Recall and

Demonic Tutor. And for all of those out there who have been secretly wishing for a flying, purple hippo, *Alliances* should make you very happy.

We're actually done with *Alliances* here in WotC R&D, and have already moved on to the next project. The second *Magic* stand-alone expansion with 300+ cards (as yet unnamed; see below) will introduce several new concepts to the *Magic* world. We've just started playtesting the cards, and the early feedback is good. (One creature actually got a "You're kidding, right?" response from two different playtest groups.) Look for the set this fall.

While we're talking about the expansion, let me explain something that seems to have confused a number of people. When we make an expansion, we give it a silly code name so that we have some way to refer to it. At the WotC offices we use an interoffice Macintosh communications program called FirstClass® that lets us post messages in different folders. When we discovered that any folder named after a sound in the Macintosh's sound file would cause the sound to go off when the folder was opened, we started jokingly naming our expansions after these sound files, just to hear the sounds. Alliances, for example, is known around the office as "Quack." Likewise, the new stand-alone got a Macintosh sound file: "Sosumi." (It sounds sort of like piano keys being hit.) The name accidentally got leaked to the net, and we've been the butt of a great number of jokes. So just for the record, the name has nothing to do with any kind of attitude toward litigation. That's our story and we're sticking with it....

COMICS AND COMPUTERS AND CALENDARS (OH MY!)

I have some good news for all you comic book fans out there. While it might not surprise you to hear that Bill Sienkiewicz (famed artist of such titles as *Voodoo Child, Elektra: Assassin*, and *The New Mutants*) will be drawing a few covers for some of the upcoming

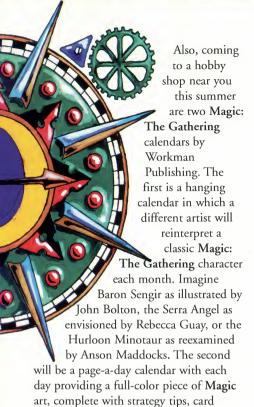
Magic: The Gathering comic books by Acclaim, his art will also grace the game itself when he illustrates several artifact creatures in *Alliances*.

For those of you out there who have purchased the Magic: The Gathering Desktop Themes, the screen saver from MicroProse, let me fill you in on a little secret. Like most programmers, the designers of the screen saver decided to throw a few "Easter eggs" (little surprises for adventurous users to find) into the product. To get access to some special additional art, try clicking on interesting card combinations. For example, my sources tell me that Icy Manipulator and Royal Assassin work quite nicely together.

Speaking of computers, I am happy to report that MicroProse is busy at work making sure that the Magic: The Gathering computer game becomes a reality. Since the project is headed by lead designer Sid Meier (creator of such computer classics as Civilization™ and Railroad Tycoon™), we expect nothing but the best for the game. In fact, we even sent rules guru Tom Wylie (of the Internet) to Maryland to help ensure that the computer game remains as faithful as possible. In R&D, we've been playtesting an alpha version of the game, and our only real problem is that Charlie Catino (of "The Deck of Infinite Recursion" fame) won't stop playing it.

And for those with Net access who don't know about all the exciting stuff cyberspace has for the Magic player, let me fill you in. You can visit the WotC Web site at http://www.wizards.com; check out the Magic newsgroups at rec.games.trading-cards.magic*; or play Magic over the IRC (most often at #mtg).

DUELIST



BUT WAIT-THERE'S MORE!

backgrounds, snippets about Dominia,

comments from artists, and Magic trivia.

A lot of you wrote in about the "puzzling secret" in last issue's "WotC News," and I think it's finally time we let this cat out of the bag. The much-rumored *Magic: The Puzzling* book is finally a reality. Being released some time this summer, the book will include all-new puzzles (by none other than myself, of course), including both traditional and variety puzzles. The book will range from "easy" to "nasty" and is guaranteed to make you throw it across the room at least once.



If the cards on this page aren't enough of a clue, let me make it official—Magic is finally making its way to Japan.

Premiering this March, Magic: The Gathering will be sold in the land of the rising sun. And I've been told that other Asian languages are soon to follow.

BIG MONEY! NO WHAMMY!

Probably one of the most exciting things to happen this year is the creation of the Magic Professional Tournament circuit. With top players competing for "big money," it looks like the first tournament (held over Presidents' Day weekend in New York City) will be the most exciting Magic event ever. To ensure the highest level of competition, Wizards of the Coast is flying in ten top players from around the world to participate:

- Mu Luen Wang—from Austria; '95 World Quarterfinalist
- Marc Hernandez—from France; second place at the '95 World Championship; '95 French National Champion
- Bertrand Lestree—from France; second place at the '94 World Championship; '94 French National Champion
- Henri Schildt—from Finland; '95 World Quarterfinalist
- Ivan Curina—from Italy; '95 World Quarterfinalist
- Andrea Redi—from Italy; '95 World Quarterfinalist
- Alexander Blumke—from Switzerland;
 '95 World Champion
- Mark Justice—from the United States;
 '95 World Semifinalist; U.S. National Champion
- Henry Stern—from the United States; '95 World Semifinalist; second place at the U.S. Nationals
- Zak Dolan—from the United States; '94 World Champion

The first Professional Tournament will also be testing out a new rule designed to make serious competition as fair as possible. Simply known around the office as the "play/draw rule," it forces the player who goes first to skip his or her first draw. This divides the two advantages of going first (getting to play first and getting to draw first) between the two players.

A VISITIN' WE WILL GO

Every month, Wizards of the Coast sends out a small group of WotC employees and Magic artists to visit game stores in some area of the country. These visits, called Caravan Tours, include artist signings, gunslinging (take on a WotC employee, but be careful—we're good), Magic trivia, and giveaways (including special merchan-

dise only available at the Tours). For those who might be in New York the week before the Professional Tournament, you have the perfect opportunity to catch our Caravan Tours:

- Thursday, February 8, at Crazy Egor's in Rochester, NY
- Friday, February 9, at Twilight Book & Game in Syracuse, NY
- Saturday, February 10, at Saratoga Sci-Fi Shop in Saratoga Springs, NY
- Sunday, February 11, at Head Games Ltd. in Princeton, NJ
- Tuesday, February 13, at The Dragon's Den in Yonkers, NY
- Wednesday, February 14, at The Dragon's Den in Poughkeepsie, NY

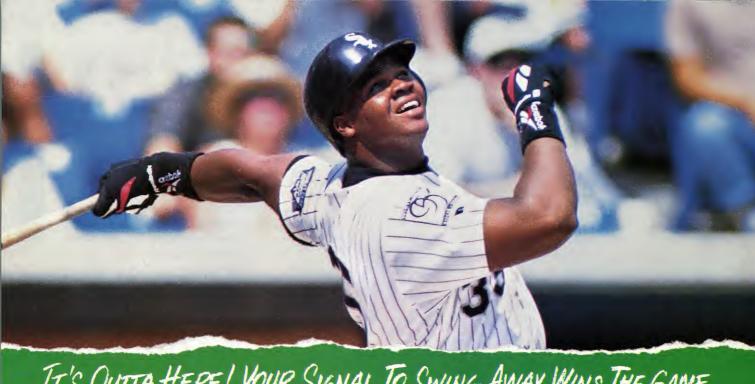
BACK AT THE HOME FRONT

I'd like to welcome a new addition here at WotC. Rich Fukutaki joined us in January as the V.P. General Manager of Magic: The Gathering. For those not adept in interpreting fancy office titles, Rich is the new head of the Magic team. I tried to get him to give me a pithy quote, but Rich replied that he wasn't a pithy, quote sort of guy. He did promise, though, that he would-and I quote-"not screw up a great game." Rich, glad to have you aboard!

I'M SO GLAD WE HAD THIS TIME TOGETHER

That's all for this issue. If you'd like to see this column come back, I'm going to need your help. Either write to *The Duelist* at P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057, or send email to **duelist@wizards.com** and say you want to see "Insider Trading" return. Also, assuming I come back next issue (I am ever the optimist), I'm interested in getting cool **Magic** stories from all of you. If you have any interesting anecdotes to share, I promise to give you credit. Once again my email address is **woody@wizards.com**. Thanks for reading, and may your mana be plentiful!





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need brains. You need guts. You need some luck. Because you call the shots, just like a big league skipper.













Win a chance to compete in a



PROFESSIONAL TOURNAMENT!

Pack your bags and tune your deck—Wizards of the Coast is going to fly you and your cards to the second-ever Magic™ professional tournament!

Complete the tournament skill challenge below (designed by our own puzzle mastermind, Mark Rosewater) and you'll be entered into a drawing to win an all-expenses-paid trip to compete in the second Black Lotus pro tournament on the first weekend of May in Long Beach, California. If you win, you could take home part of a purse totaling over \$30,000. No matter how you do, you can bet on having the most intense Magic weekend of your life.

SIDEBOARD A: Earthquake (2) Lightning Bolt (3) Fireball (2) Pyroclasm (3) Mountain (4) Sleight of Mind SIDEBOARD B: Swords to Plowshares (2) Red Elemental Blast Pyroclasm (3) Pyroblast (2) Howling Mine (3) CoP: Red (4) Black Vise Swords to Plowshares Land Tax (2) Disenchant (2) **Balance** Karma Red Elemental Blast Earthquake Flashfires Crumble Tsunami Hurricane CoP: Red SIDEBOARD D: Pyroclasm (3) Lhurgoyf (2) Crumble (3) Anarchy (2) Whirling Dervish (2) Pyroblast (3)

Last year's Magic World Championship came down to these eight contenders, all of whom will be competing in the first Magic professional tournament, Feb. 16-18 In New York. Listed with each of the eight contenders is a description of the deck he used in the World Championship; listed beside the contenders are the eight sideboards the players used. Correctly match each sideboard with the appropriate player, and we'll enter you in a drawing to win a trip to the pro tournament. To submit your entry, either send your answers on a photocopy of this page, include them on a postcard or in a letter, or send your answers via email. Entries can be sent to The Duelist™, Attn: Pro Tournament Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057 or to duelist@wizards.com. Entries must by received by March 15, 1996.

World Championship Competitors

- I. Alexander Blumke (Switzerland)—Blumke won the World Championship with a well-crafted denial deck, complete with a few creatures and a smattering of two other colors to add a little defense to his game.
- 2. Ivan Curina (Italy)—Curina played a weenle horde deck of all one color.
- 3. Marc Hernandez (France)—Playing a strong control deck of almost one color, Hernandez most often defeated his opponents with either Black Vises or one of a few key cards in a secondary color taken from his
- 4. Mark Justice (United States)—Winning most of his games with direct-damage spells or large creatures such as Orggs and Shivan Dragons, Justice occasionally used artifacts to damage his opponents.
- 5. Andrea Redi (Italy)—Playing a mono-color deck, Redi defeated his opponents with direct damage and a large number of goblins.
- 6. Henri Schildt (Finland)—Using an almost mono-color, creatureless deck, Schildt defeated his opponents with direct damage, Mishra's Factories, and Black Vises.
- _7. Henry Stern (United States)—Nicknamed "Vise Age," Stern's deck was a quick, two-color deck which defeated its adversaries with fast creatures and direct damage.
- 8. Mu Luen Wang (Austria)—Wang came prepared with a tricolor land-destruction deck, complete with an army of small creatures.

Name		
Address	STATE ZIP	

CoP: Artifacts

CoP: Black CoP: Red (2) Stromgald Cabal (2) Land Tax Blue Elemental Blast Magical Hack Sleight of Mind Gloom (4)

Prismatic Ward

Pygmy Allosaurus Pale Bears Tranquility (3) Birds of Paradise Crumble (4) Despotic Scepter Lifeforce Whirling Dervish (2) Hurricane

SIDEBOARD G:

Anarchy (3) **Pyroblast** Red Elemental Blast (3) Earthquake Pyroclasm Nevinyrral's Disk (2) Detonate (2) The Rack (2)

Dwarven Hold Zuran Orb Iron Star (2) **Pyroclasm** Anarchy (2) Flashfires (2) Shatter (2) Red Elemental Blast (4)





A SPECIAL EDITION OF

WOTC NEWS

by Jenny Scott

A NEW ERA BEGINS

December 7, 1995, marked the beginning of a new era at Wizards of the Coast: As most readers probably already know, Wizards management announced that in order to focus more of its resources on its more profitable trading card games, several other product lines would be scaled down or cut entirely. This reorganization affected all three of Wizards's active roleplaying lines, its table games, and its book publishing division.

"This was a very difficult strategic business decision to make," said Wizards
President Peter Adkison in a press release.
"We are not abandoning these products or their fans and are looking for new publishers for the roleplaying games." Close to fifty jobs in the U.S. and Europe were cut, but a number of those employees have since been hired back into different positions created by the reorganization.

Wizards reported record sales and profits for 1995, fueled by high earnings from the company's **Deckmaster**™ line of trading card games, games that the company hopes to give more attention to in the immediate future. Adkison said more resources and energy will be devoted to competitive game events and international projects that support its games. The company hopes to explore opportunities in electronic and computer-based gaming as well.

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

Wizards of the Coast's founders' vision of making great RPGs led to Wizards's first roleplaying product, *The Primal Order™*, in the spring of 1992. The company also acquired the **Talislanta™** RPG license, and for the next two years released eight new products in that line. Sales were steady but never outstanding, so when **Magic: The Gathering®** came out in the summer of '93 it was no surprise that roleplaying took a back seat.

Still, Wizards was committed to producing quality roleplaying products, as evidenced by the hiring of established RPG designer/writer Jonathan Tweet in 1994 to head the roleplaying team. Tweet came to Wizards to pitch four new roleplaying games; only one of those, **EVERWAY**TM, was produced. Wizards picked up **Ars Magica**TM at about the same time.

One of the first tough decisions about RPGs faced by Wizards came in 1994, when the roleplaying team decided to stop publishing **Talislanta**. With strong, player-supported games like ArM in hand, and new games like **EVERWAY** in the works, there weren't many resources left over for **Talislanta**. In 1994, WotC ended its agreement to license **Talislanta** from its creator, Stephen Sechi.

While Wizards's success has allowed it to produce high-quality games that less stable companies couldn't, the company's rapid growth and sheer size have proven to be huge obstacles to the roleplaying teams. Frequently, resources—from people to equipment—were pulled off of roleplaying projects in order to get higher-priority Deckmaster products out the door. Magic became known internally—not so affectionately—as the "eight-hundred-pound gorilla."

Adkison believes that this juggling act of balancing the needs of RPGs and TCGs has been the source of many of Wizards's organizational problems. "RPGs and TCGs require very different attitudes and approaches," he says. "Since Magic came out there have been essentially two cliques at WotC, with very little overlap. It's been creating stress in the organization and has made us a bit dysfunctional."

At press time, Wizards of the Coast was still entertaining several proposals for the futures of the various RPG lines. "Our number-one criterion in making a decision will be our confidence level in whether or not the company taking over the line will really focus on it and deliver," says Adkison. "The goal is to *improve* the situation for people who are fans of the games by turning the games over to companies that will really focus on them." The wishes of the games' creators (Dave Allsop for **SLA Industries**TM, Jonathan Tweet for ArM and **EVERWAY**) will weigh heavily in the decision of where the games end up.

EVERWAY AT THE CROSSROADS

Released in August, 1995, after more than a year of development at Wizards (and at least another year of pre-Wizards develop-

In Case You're Wondering...

Have no fear, gentle readers: *The Duelist* was unaffected by the cuts and is going as strong as ever! "*The Duelist* will continue to play an important role in providing our customers with timely information and official rulings on **Magic**, V:TES, and other trading card games," says Adkison. "In fact, we [may even] take *The Duelist* monthly in 1996 so we can do an even better job of supporting our **Deckmaster** games and keeping players informed." You heard it here first, folks…





ment by its creator, Jonathan Tweet), the image-based **EVERWAY** roleplaying game was cut from Wizards's line-up after just four months on the shelves.

Hoping to expand the roleplaying audience by appealing to new players, Tweet began to develop **EVERWAY** at a fantasy convention. Milling about the dealers' room, Tweet wondered why there were so many fantasy fans who didn't play roleplaying games. He wondered what kind of game might draw those people into roleplaying, and it was with that challenge in mind that he worked out the initial design of **EVERWAY**.

Tweet's original conception of **EVERWAY** was as a roleplaying game that replaced the tried-and-true dice with a tarot deck: gamemasters would make a draw from the tarot (which was later replaced with a "Fortune Deck") to determine the outcomes of players' actions.

In early 1995, the production cycle began in earnest. A dedicated product team was formed, and the game debuted at the 1995 GenCon[®]. In the months following its release, it enjoyed positive-to-glowing reviews and respectable sales.

The fate of the **EVERWAY** line remains uncertain at press time. Several companies have made bids to buy rights to **EVERWAY**, including both new and established game companies and at least one start-up company composed of current Wizards employees.

Tweet hopes to remain involved with **EVERWAY**, regardless of where it ends up. "Wizards is one of very few companies that could have afforded the start-up costs of the **EVERWAY** line: the development time, the art, the printing, and the advertising," he says. "Now that Wizards has funded the line's start-up, however, a smaller company can maintain the line. **EVERWAY** could be a very big deal for a smaller company. No matter where the game goes, I'd like to continue to be involved in its development."

ARS MAGICA: VALE, SEDALIS

Ars Magica was originally published in 1987 by Lion Rampant, a partnership consisting of Jonathan Tweet and Mark Rein•Hagen, who wanted to design a fantasy RPG that would have "the best magic system ever because [they] had yet to find

a magic system in another fantasy RPG that [they] really liked." Tweet was particularly disappointed that wizards in RPGs were weaker than those that appear in literature. "Most fantasy RPGs make wizards on par with other character types," says Tweet, "whereas literary wizards are generally very powerful. We took 'powerful wizards' as our premise and built a game around that."

Tweet eventually left Lion Rampant in 1989 and went on to a freelance career,



and in 1990 the company merged with White Wolf, publisher of *White Wolf* magazine. The new company became White Wolf Game Studio.

From 1990 to 1994, White Wolf published **Ars Magica**, and during that time a third edition of the game was released, emphasizing more "infernal" elements of the background and adding an anti-magical force known as "True Reason."

In 1994, White Wolf sold the rights for **Ars Magica** to Wizards of the Coast. While preparations for the long-awaited fourth edition were made, several supplements were released, each of which helped to steer the game back toward Tweet's vision for the line, representing a more accessible, "more directly useful" style.

Long-time Wizards employee Wade Racine ulimately took the reins of **Ars**

Magica Fourth Edition (ArM4), forming the "Rogue team" to provide support for Ars Magica and to develop game worlds for roleplaying games, fiction, and other formats. The manuscript for ArM4 had been written, edited, and laid out when management announced that Wizards would no longer be producing roleplaying games. Most of the Rogue team members were laid off as a result of the company's reorganization; several of these people, still staunch supporters of the Ars Magica game, have made plans to form a new game company and have offered a proposal to Wizards to acquire the game. Another start-up company comprised of current Wizards employees has also made a bid on ArM, as have several established gaming companies. At press time, no final decision about the future of ArM had been made.

SLA INDUSTRIES

Starting as a small independent company in Scotland, Nightfall Games is a creative group that has developed its product, the SLA (pronounced 'slay') Industries role-playing line, from an unknown quality game to a success. The lavishly illustrated SLA product line combines elements of futurism with the horror, science-fiction, and cyberpunk genres to create a dark-future escapist background for the mature roleplayer. The game's quality artwork and design build a believable world that's packed full of intrigue.

In April of 1994, Nightfall Games merged with Wizards of the Coast and went on to release *Karma*[™], the first sourcebook for **SLA Industries**. At that time, **SLA Industries** was rated among the top five roleplaying products by Virgin Megastores, the biggest retail chain of hobby retailers in the U.K. In 1995, Nightfall released *The Gamemaster's Pack*[™] for **SLA** and continued to work on a number of projects, both for future **SLA Industries** supplements and for new product lines.

It seems likely that the original Nightfall Games group will re-form in the wake of Wizards's cuts, but it is unknown whether the group would remain in hometown Glasgow or bring the property to the U.S.





THE MAGIC ADVENTURE GAME

Development and playtesting continues for an adventure game based on **Magic:** The Gathering. Three of the four members of the "Black Lotus team" (the product team devoted to creating the game) have joined Wizards' Research & Development team to develop a new prototype of the game.

This spring, a solicitation for a game designer advertised in industry zine Alarums & Excursions caught the eye of several TSR employees and freelancers, among them Wolfgang Baur, Mike Selinker, and Teeuwynn Woodruff, the three designers who are now working on the game. After comparing notes, the group pitched a unified proposal to Wizards, convincing them that hiring a team of designers would expedite the development process.

A team of four (the fourth, Tim Beach, opted off of the project following elimination of the WotC roleplaying lines) was brought on board in the summer of 1995, and the first prototype was presented to the company this fall. Extensive playtesting and revision continues to date. There is no release date scheduled for the game yet, but its creators say that development is proceeding steadily.

THE FUTURE OF MAGIC

Although the Book Publishing team at Wizards has been disbanded, the company will still be doing lots of books—there will still be plenty of **Magic**



fiction, and there are plans for **Netrunner**[™] and V:TES fiction as well, but Wizards is no longer moving forward with the idea of publishing original (non-game-related) fiction.

Wizards will continue licensing gamerelated fiction through established publishers (continuing its licensing agreement with HarperCollins to make fiction books based on **Magic: The Gathering**, for example), but these relationships will be managed within game product groups. Kij Johnson was retained from the original Book Publishing team to organize these efforts.

What's next? There are several **Magic** books in the works at various stages of development. Look first for Teri McLaren's upcoming **Magic** novel, *Song of Time*.

TABLE GAMES: LIFE ISN'T FAIR!

Among the product teams affected by Wizards's reorganization was the Table Games team, which put out two lines of mass-appeal "table games": a fast-paced robot board game, **RoboRally**TM, and a social card game, **The Great Dalmuti**TM.

With the massive organizational changes, many of the Table Games team's resources were allocated to the **Deckmaster** teams. Table Games disbanded, and custody of **RoboRally** and **Dalmuti** was given to a slim new department called "Stealth Games." The team will continue to stock, sell, and reprint the games in the two table game lines (including **RoboRally**, **RoboRally**: *Armed and Dangerous*™, and **The Great Dalmuti**) and to take care of the roleplaying lines until they can be placed in good homes. Stealth hopes to release two to three table games annually.

As Richard Garfield tells it, he designed RoboRally in the summer of 1983, "on the week of my twentieth birthday... so that I could play it as a birthday game." When Garfield met Mike Davis three years later, Davis took it upon himself to see the game published. Over the course of the next five years, Davis took the game to four companies with no luck. Finally in late 1990, Davis noticed some posts on the Internet about a new game company, a young Wizards of the Coast, which at the time was producing only roleplaying

games and to which Davis ultimately pitched the game. While the company couldn't afford to produce something as capital-intensive as a board game at the time, Adkison was interested in a

game that would be playable at conventions in a short amount of time—a request which Richard took to heart when he designed the game that would be **Magic:** The Gathering.

During the time while Magic was being developed, Davis and Garfield—with Wizards's blessing—tried to sell RoboRally to Mayfair Games. (This encounter led to the rumor that the two had pitched Magic to Mayfair Games, which wasn't true.) While negotiations with Mayfair Games continued, Magic's success skyrocketed, and Wizards was able to afford to produce RoboRally after all.

The Great Dalmuti began six years ago when Garfield was "introduced to a fascinating card game by a friend.... It rewarded the player in the lead and penalized the player who was falling behind. The game was played for no other purpose than to play. There was no winner or loser at the end; there was only the longest-lasting 'Dalmuti,' and the 'peon,' the player most talented at groveling."

Garfield taught the game to his friends and family, even his bridge club, adding a scoring element and a way of winning to the game. Everyone loved it. "No matter who I played it with, once we started playing we couldn't stop."

It was Garfield's sister Elizabeth who encouraged him to try to get Dalmuti published by Wizards. It wasn't a hard sell: Garfield taught the game to Wizards employees, and before long the entire office was hooked. Huge Dalmuti games played with regular decks of cards or playtest copies became a popular afterwork pasttime, and it was clear the game would be a hit. **The Great Dalmuti** was released in 1994.





HIGHLANDER THE CARD GAME

MOVIE EDITION

The time of The Gathering has dawned.

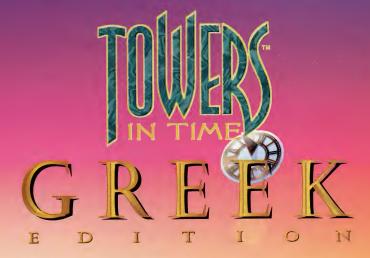
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Compiled by Allen Varney (a.varney | @genie.com)

THE NEW WAVE OF LICENSING

In two brief years, surfeited by a glut of get-rich-quick releases, the trading card game market has developed a distaste for unknown new games from unknown new publishers. In this resistant climate, new games require major advertising pushes or—the new fall-back—a media license.

In this, as in other respects, the card game industry repeats the experience of the roleplaying-game hobby in the early '80s. The faddish popularity of Dungeons & Dragons® spawned a horde of no-name imitators that soon dwindled, leaving the field open for a later wave of RPGs based on—see if this list sounds familiar—Tolkien, James Bond, comic books, Star Wars, Star Trek, and other television shows, including the

cartoon He-Man and the Masters of the Universe. Substitute X-Files for He-Man, add a few video games, and you have the modern licensing wave in trading card games.

Why license? The main reason is exposure. Faith Price of Mayfair Games says licenses mean "more universal appeal. They're bringing in people who ordinarily would never look at these games." Price cited a planned expansion for Mayfair's new Fantasy Adventures™ card game based on the "Wheel of Time" fantasy novels by Robert Jordan: "Jordan fans who've never played Magic are coming to us and asking about this game."

Dave Hewitt of Precedence agrees: "Having a license gives people a reason to check out your project. We still feel if you have a great game, you can overcome not having a license. But if people never play your game, they'll never find out it's good. We're looking at a couple of licenses."

Most of the old licensed RPGs floundered. But some were excellent designs, notably Mayfair's late DC Heroes (1986) and West End's still-thriving Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game (1987). Generally the licenses that helped a game, as opposed to merely promoting it, offered a big, distinctive world with a wide scope of action. Common wisdom of the early '80s held that in this regard there were only seven top-flight licenses: Star Wars, Star Trek, Tolkien's Middle-earth, James Bond, Marvel Comics, DC Comics, and (the only property that did not spawn an RPG) Disney.



Perhaps the years have added to this pantheon, yet the number of satisfying licenses remains small. A card game, like an RPG, depends on a large and various world. Iron Crown Enterprises developed 450-plus cards for its Middle-earth: The Wizards™ game. It would be hard to draw so many worthwhile cards from, say, the Pixar/Disney animated film Toy Story (seventy-seven minutes about toys in a boy's room).

Seldom mentioned in any announcement of a new license is whether the licensed property would benefit from a game—whether the game adds anything to the customer's experience or just exploits it. In roleplaying the record is poor, but *Star Wars* has benefited tremendously from West End Games' yeoman service in cataloging, explaining, and developing aspects of its universe. Lucasfilm, maker of the *Star Wars* movies, has adopted the roleplaying material as canonical. This is the best kind of license.

Drew Bittner of Wildstorm Productions offers a design philosophy that will hopefully become typical: "There's no doubt that [Wildstorms TM] being a licensed game really made it work. But we put a lot of effort into making it reflect the characters. The game enhances fans' appreciation for the characters and the comics."

EXPANSION UPDATE

In the spring we'll see new expansions for these games, among others:

Blood Wars™ (TSR, Lake Geneva, WI): Three new Escalation Packs appear in 1996, in the same format as previous packs. Series #4, Insurgents of the Inner Planes, arrives in March, with Weapons & Warmongers and Hand of Fate due later this year. Warlord's Tactical Manual, a player's guide, appeared in January.

Doomtrooper™ (Heartbreaker Hobbies, Folsom, PA): The next expansion, Mortificator, designed by Brian Winter, covers the Brotherhood's ninja troops. The 122-card set (two rarities) appears in February in eight-card boosters (\$1.75). Doomtrooper merchandising has reached remarkable proportions. A video game for Sega and Nintendo appeared in December, and a CD-ROM game (also called Mortificator) came out in January. Pressman Films (Wall Street, Conan) begins filming the Mutant Chronicles movie March 6. The Acclaim comic, Golgotha, is also the title of the next expansion, not yet scheduled. (Web: www.target.se)

Galactic Empires™ (Companion Games, Stamford, NY): Piracy, a 152-card expansion in three rarities, appears in March. Designed by Andrew Smith, the set adds new rules that let you send your pirates to take over enemy terrain and steal production. Piracy is sold in six-card booster packs (\$.99).

Gridiron™ (Precedence, Tempe, AZ): The Championship Edition, which rotates out some rare and chase cards and adds fifty new cards, is currently scheduled for early spring, but this date could slip. After that comes the first expansion, *Blacklist*, a 150-card set (three rarities) by the original game's design team, John Myler, Paul Brown, and Dave Hewitt. Precedence is also busy with a couple of new game projects. (Contact: gridiron@eternity.com)

Legend of the Five Rings™ (Alderac Entertainment Group/Isomedia, Ontario, CA): The first expansion, Shadowlands, introducing the Scorpion Clan and Naga race, is still on track for March. The second expansion, Forbidden Knowledge, due in July, features a sinister set of artifacts called the Twelve Black Scrolls. Future expansions have the working titles Anvil of Despair, Crimson & Jade, and Time of the Void. (Web: www.isomedia.com/homes/aeg/~aeg.html)

Middle-earth: The Wizards[™] (Iron Crown Enterprises, Charlottesville, VA): In May or June comes Middle-earth: The Dragons, an expansion by the original game's design team. The set has 100–200 cards in three rarities, sold (probably) in twelve-card boosters. About half the cards revolve around dragons, and individual dragons such as Smaug will have more than one manifestation. "Tolkien allows for dragons, so we are filling in the blanks," says designer Mike Reynolds.

We won't see the second expansion, Dark Minions, until late 1996. "Factions will play an active part" in that set, says Reynolds. "We're trying to allow play from the perspective of the bad guys, Saruman and Sauron." (Contact: metwice@aol.com. See the review of Middle-earth: The Wizards on p. 93.)

Mythos™ (Chaosium, Albany, CA): Chaosium's Charlie Krank is designing the Call of Cthulhu trading card game and the first three booster series simultaneously (four hundred cards total). The game and the first expansion, Expeditions of Miskatonic U, appear together in March. These cards center on New England's "Lovecraft Country" of Arkham, Kingsport, and other spooky places. Late in April comes the second expansion, Cthulhu Rising, which travels to the Pacific to the sunken city of R'lyeh, and a month after that comes Legends of the Necronomicon, set largely in Central Europe and Turkey. (Contact: mythosccg@aol.com)

On the Edge[™] (Atlas Games, Northfield, MN): The next expansion, *Wetworks*, remains unscheduled, but in February comes a new OnTE players' league with the working name "The Conspiracy." Instead of national tournaments and player ratings, the league emphasizes local chapters in the manner of Steve Jackson Games' Car Wars organization, the AADA. Contact Paul Nurnberger at Atlas Games, (612) 638-0098; burford@winternet.com. (Contact:

Pentacle™ (Companion Games): As reported in *Duelist* #8, this multiplayer fantasy game, designed by Tim Carlton, was originally published by Morningstar

Games in 1980. The revised game is playable from a communal deck or with individual player decks. Companion is re-releasing a 121-card core set in February, and in the spring comes a booster series called *Creatures of the Night*. The size of the expansion is not set, but booster packs will contain six cards (\$.99).

Rage[™] (White Wolf Game Studio, Atlanta, GA): Mike Tinney's War in the Amazon booster set, in the same format as The Wyrm, is described as a "setting-based" expansion. It's due in February. (Contact: achilli@aol.com)

Red Zone[™] (NXT Games/Donruss, La Jolla, CA): Red Zone 1995: *Expansion Teams* is scheduled to ship in January. This set includes 90 new player cards, including stars like Emmitt Smith, Deion Sanders, and Andre Rison, among others. It includes players from the two NFL expansion teams previously unavailable. It will be available in twelve-card booster packs.

Redemption™ (Cactus Games, Chesapeake, VA): The first expansion, *The Prophets*, is scheduled to appear in January. On Dec. 11 last year, Redemption designer Rob Anderson appeared on Pat Robertson's 700 Club television show before an audience of two million, talking about the impact the game has had on both the Christian and the adventure-gaming hobby markets. (Contact: cactusrob@aol.com)

Shadowfist™ (Daedalus Games, Seattle, WA): Coming in April, Flashpoint, designed by Jose Garcia and Rob Heinsoo, offers about 150 cards describing a showdown between the Dragons and the Architects of the Flesh, both in modern-day Brazil and in the future. Daedalus' John Tynes says this "very male-hormone-driven expansion" has "a lot of cards to kill things and blow them up." Flashpoint may include story cards that relate vignettes from the storyline, as well as cards that offer checklists or clarifications of confusing cards. (Contact: jgarcia@halcyon.com)

SimCity®: The Card Game™ (Mayfair Games, Niles, IL): Washington DC, a 120-card stand-alone fixed-deck set (\$15) in the Chicago format, appears in March. It's designed by Darwin Bromley, Doug Tabb, and Jay Tummelson. A New York standalone set is in the works. (Contact: price@interaccess.com; Web: www.coolgames.com)

Spellfire™ (TSR): Reports of Spellfire's death were greatly exaggerated. Expansion series #7, Underdark, appeared in December. For 1996, TSR has announced a fourth edition of the basic game (June), four new expansions (Runes & Ruins, #8, appears in February, followed later by Birthright, Draconomicon, and Night Stalkers), and a second volume of the Spellfire Reference Guide in November.

Star Trek®: The Next Generation™ (Decipher, Norfolk, VA): After finally securing approval by the licensor, Paramount, Decipher released the long-delayed Collector's Tin and the Alternate Universes expansion in December. Alternate Universes

includes Decipher's first ultra-rare card, the future Enterprise. The company plans to release the *Q Continuum* set in July and *Holodeck Adventures* in late '96. Parker Brothers is releasing a two-player set with two stacked decks, including a Spock card. Decipher's license with Paramount expires at the end of

1996, and neither party plans to

renew it. (Contact: DCustServe@decipher.com; Web: www.decipher.com)

Star Wars® Customizable Card Game™ (Decipher): Like the basic game, the first expansion, A New Hope, is based entirely on the first Star Wars movie. Due in June, the 121-card set (sold in fifteen-card boosters for \$3 each) is designed by Technical Game Services, the original game's design team. The second expansion, The Empire Strikes Back, arrives in October.

Decipher plans free Star Wars tournament kits and sanctioned tournament events. For details, ask your retailer to contact a distributor. (Contact: DCustServe@decipher.com; Web: www.decipher.com)

Tempest of the Gods[™] (Black Dragon Press, Logan, UT): *Neteru* is the first expansion and contains ninety cards related to Egyptian mythology. Sold "probably" in nine-card boosters for \$1.95, the set is due in late spring. (Contact: bdpress | @aol.com; Web: www.sunrem.com/~bdp)

Wildstorms™ (Wildstorm Productions, La Jolla, CA):
Coupons in recent Image Comics are good for a twelve-card
"Redemption Pack" of exclusive cards removed from the general
print run of the first expansion, Conflict. The white-bordered
Wildstorms Unlimited Edition, with corrected text and new
chase cards, now exists, but the company is using it to fill large
back-orders for booster packs. The edition will be formally
launched in March. Exclusive cards will be offered through
Image Comics.

Also in March, Wildstorm will publish a twenty-four-page player's guide in comic-book format and a cardstock copy of the game's Battle Mat. Art for the mat is on the company Web site, along with power enhancements that customize character cards to match recent issues of the comics.

(Web: www.wildstorm.com/home/trading_cards/wsccg.html)

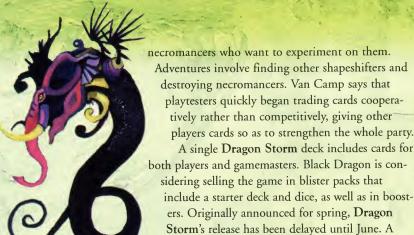
Wing Commander™ (Mag Force 7, Williams Bay, WI): Mag Force is distributing promotional cards with upcoming Wing Commander novels and the Wing Commander 3 computer game, and is considering an expansion for the coming year. (Contact: designers@mag7.com)

PREVIEWS

Dragon Storm™ (Black Dragon Press, Logan, UT): This hybrid of cards and roleplaying was designed by Magic artist Susan Van Camp and developed by her husband, Mark Harmon.

Dragon Storm is essentially a simple skill-based roleplaying system, a la RuneQuest, that uses cards to embody every aspect of the game. Each player has a deck, as does the gamemaster; the game also uses two six-sided dice. Players get a certain number of points to design a character, spending (say) 3 points to get a sword card, 2 points for a certain spell, and so on. Individual rules for each item and ability are on the card, to minimize hunting through rulebooks. The gamemaster uses a separate set of cards representing terrain, events occurring there, non-player characters, and NPC abilities. The GM combines these into a story, either by improvisation or by following a pre-designed scenario. A scenario can be run with minimal preparation.

In the game, players are shapechangers who are hunted by



Gangland!™ (Corglenburg, Ltd., Independence, MO): The latest game to glorify crooks, Gangland! casts three to eight players as gangsters during Prohibition in the 1920s and '30s. Each player has a gang of five characters, all fictitious thugs except Al Capone, rated according to Business Savvy, Muscle, and Loyalty. Playing from a common deck, players assign "legit" front businesses to their characters to launder hot cash from illicit trucking, entertainment, and restaurant activities. They can spend "pocket money" to finance informants, and use bribes to attract other gangs' members and arrange assassinations and massacres. The winner is the last survivor or the thug with the most valuable empire.

handbook with campaign background and scenarios

is due a couple of months after the game's release.

Gangland! is sold in a fixed 170-card "Core Game System" (\$19.95), out in February, and in randomly sorted boosters drawn from a ninety-card Enhancement Set due in early summer. It's designed by Bruce Quade, whose previous credits include a drug awareness game called *No*, published five years ago. A companion game, *G-Man*, may follow in autumn.

Killer Instinct[™] (Topps, New York, NY): Based on the smash arcade video game, Killer Instinct is a near-future multiplayer slugfest designed by Greg Gorden (Torg, Earthdawn, DC Heroes) and developed by longtime freelancer Shane Hensley. The 363-card set, printed by Carta Mundi in Belgium, features computer graphics from the game. "The card game also provides a glimpse of the big picture behind the Killer Instinct tournament, something not revealed in the video game," says a press release.

Due by May, Killer Instinct is sold in sixty-card starters (\$8.95) and fifteen-card boosters (\$2.95). Topps' marketing targets both video-game fans and the card-game audience.

RuinsWorld™ (Medallion Simulations, Fresno, CA): This is a fantasy card game with roleplaying elements, in the mode of Games Workshop's DungeonQuest, TSR's CardMaster, and other card games that replicate fantasy dungeon crawls. Each of one to four players becomes one of twenty characters (each sixty-five-card starter deck, \$8.95, includes a character) with a Journey Deck, a Market (equipment) Deck, and a secret goal that determines whether to help the other characters or strike out alone. The characters play as a team against a common Play Deck of monsters and treasure. A game lasts one to two hours.

MASTER OF MAYHEM



Name: Robin D. Laws
Age: 31

Hometown: Orillia, Ontario, Canada
Occupation: Freelance game designer

How he's different from ninety percent of the general population: Says he actually learned something useful from his undergraduate studies. (He earned his B.A. in Fine Arts Studies at York University in Toronto.)

How you can tell he's Canadian: Pronounces "about" like "ah-boot."

What he's done for you lately: Co-designed Daedalus Games' Hong-Kong-action-movie-inspired rock-'em, sock-'em, blow-'em-up-good trading card game Shadowfist. Also designed Feng Shui, the roleplaying game on which Shadowfist is based (due in April).

Laws has numerous design credits to his name, including *The Cut-Ups Project*™ expansion for Atlas Games' **On The Edge**™ TCG, as well as work on roleplaying games for Steve Jackson Games, FASA, Wizards of the Coast, and Mayfair Games, among others. Currently at work on a new trading card game that will be published by "a well-known game company" this summer, Laws works from his home in Toronto. That's where we caught up with him…

On your resumé it says you've done some work in theater (as an actor and director) and as a movie reviewer. You're obviously a big movie buff.

Films have always been a big interest of mine, and eventually that's where the big career ambition lies—screenplays! In fact, I have a screenplay that's being shopped around the Toronto movie scene now. But most of my time goes into game writing because that's what pays the bills.

How did you get into Hong Kong films?

It started through the [Toronto Film] Festival. They did a big retrospective of Asian films back in '86. Among the many cool films I saw that year was John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow*, and I was blown away by it.

So the next year, when The Killer came, I made sure I got my

ticket for that, and I went from there into looking into various other Hong Kong movies, and not just action films, either. There are a lot of really great straight dramas that come out of Hong Kong as well.

Hong Kong movies certainly have a different style....

I think you're talking about their full-throated, unapologetic approach to melodrama. It is a very different sensibility—it's very much an acquired taste. A lot of people I show them to say, "That's so clichéd. That's so overdone." But once you get into it, it's like, "Yeah, right on!"

Doesn't the excessive violence in Hong Kong action movies bother you? I once counted the number of on-screen deaths in a couple of American films decried as "violent" in their time (Robo Cop 2 and Total Recall), and each averaged around eighty-eight. The number of on-screen deaths in John Woo's Hard Boiled tops that within the first half hour.

The thing about the Hong Kong movies is that it's so completely over the top that essentially it's all happening in another universe. And it sort of sidesteps the whole moral point of the question. In the real world it's bad to kill one person, let alone two hundred or three hundred. I don't know if it's something I'm really prepared to analyze in a big way, except that when presented in that manner, it's really entertaining. Me and Aristotle are together on this whole "catharsis" thing. I think that you can go and enjoy this extremely violent entertainment and be sort of cleansed by it, and feel happy and cheerful afterward and not go out and become a mass murderer or an NRA member.

So do you own a gun yourself?

Oh, no. No. No real need for one. Though if I lived in the States...there are some places where you'd think twice about it. Of course, this may just be my exaggerated Canadian fear of America because the main perception one gets of America—living in Canada—is the local news stations from all of your border TV stations, so the only thing that happens in America is the Super Bowl and people shooting each other.

What's your favorite film of the year?

As far as American movies go, I really enjoyed *Casino*. I'm a big Scorsese fan, and basically any three hours with Robert DeNiro and Joe Pesci as gangsters is okay with me. In a way, movies like that are sort of the anti-John Woo movies because they look at the real-world mob and its violence in a deglamorized sort of way.

How about your favorite Hong Kong action movie?

That would have to be *The Killer*. That has both the melodrama and the irony at once. John Woo would have to be my favorite director.

Okay, now tell us a random fact about yourself.

I'm well-known for my colorful shirts. It's not a gimmick or anything. It's what I wear even when I'm away from conventions. Those shirts have a functional secret, too—they have pockets, which is what you want to have to scoop up business cards or carry a notebook in. That's another little secret of how to succeed in the gaming industry—always wear a shirt with pockets.

-Jeff J. Lin



In the first installment of our new **Netrunner** $^{\text{m}}$ section, The Duelist offers readers a sneak peek at the latest **Deckmaster®** game, due out in April. In this issue, **Shadowfist™** developer Rob Heinsoo takes you on a tour of the game. Then Wizards of the Coast game editor Jennifer Clarke Wilkes offers a glimpse at the collaborative efforts between Wizards of the Coast and R. Talsorian that produced the game's stunning mix of painted and computer-generated art. So welcome to the world of Netrunner, and feast your eyes on the new world that awaits you...

etrunner concerns the highrise culture of world-controlling multinational corporations and the streets that make up the precarious neutral ground between them. Those who live outside corporate society must be tough, streetsmart, and savvy with technology to survive. A hallmark of these traits is a tough, punk attitude expressed through cybernetic body enhancements. Being a cyborg is like having a desirable biological trait: those who can't merge with the technology are at an evolutionary disadvantage.

And no one's closer to the technology than a netrunner, an elite data thief who burglarizes corporations through the medium of the Net, the virtualreality environment of a worldwide computer network.

In the game of **Netrunner**, the canny Runner and the vastly powerful Corporation vie for control of the world's most precious resource: information. One player assumes the role of the Runner, who uses technological wizardry to expose the Corporation's secret plans and steal the valuable data the Corp has gathered to carry them out. The other player takes on the challenge of the Corporation (Corp), struggling to advance secret agendas before the Runner can break through its defenses.

The basic, most versatile currency of the game is the "action." The Runner player has four actions each turn and can use an action to take a "bit" [the game's unit of wealth], draw a card, bring high-tech gear into play, perform certain special functions, or "make a run"—an attempt to infiltrate corporate territory in the Net in order to steal data.

The Corp player must draw a card each turn (representing constant productive activity), and then has three actions. The Corp's goal is to "advance agendas," which is to process data to accomplish goals, but it must first build secure data forts within which to do so safely. The Corp can spend an action to gain a bit, put a counter on an agenda card to represent the process of advancing it, lay down an ice (intrusion countermeasures) card, or draw a card. The Corp has many nasty traps it can spring on the Runner, and in the otherworldly reality of Netspace, a data fortress can have guardians that are as monstrous as anything out of high fantasy.

A player wins a game by scoring 7 agenda points; in addition, the Runner loses if forced to discard more cards than are in his or her hand, while the Corp loses if it must drew a card when it has no cards to draw.

I like this game!

This isn't a review. It's not even a proper overview. All I've played with were some color playtest cards. When Netrunner comes out, other people better qualified than I am will write an overview of the game mechanics. I'm here to share my initial impressions of the game, and to point out facets that other reviewers, more focused on describing game play, may not mention.



a preview by Rob Heinsoo

"WELL, YEAH, IT'S A RICHARD GARFIELD GAME.

n several occasions when I've pointed out good things about Netrunner or listened to others answer questions about the game, that's been the response. Everyone nods their heads knowingly. You probably know what I mean already. If not, here's the translation: this game is innovative, clever, and extremely well designed.

Innovations

Until now, trading card games have followed Magic's lead in simulating battles between peers. Whether they are portraying dueling wizards or mastermind conspirators, to date players have created decks from the same pool of cards. In a few cases, the simulation has mandated that players choose cards from only one side in a conflict (as in DixieTM and Wing CommanderTM), but they use essentially equivalent cards, the same rules, and closeto-identical victory conditions. There hasn't been a term for this style of trading card game until now, because we haven't needed one; I'll coin one and call it "symmetrical."



Netrunner is the first asymmetrical trading card game, a contest between a corporation and a computer hacker. The Corp player and the Runner player use completely different cards. They even play by different rules: the rulebook separates text by using two colors of print. If you've played team sports, you'll recognize the offense/defense drill. The Corp plays defense, setting up secure data forts and progressing inexorably towards victory unless the Runner screws it up. The Runner plays offense, provoking most of the direct confrontation between the two sides. Such contests usually favor the defender, but Netrunner has been weighted to make up for any inherent advantage: it requires players to play both sides in a complete game, thus rebalancing its asymmetry.

Are other game designers going to follow Garfield's lead and design asymmetrical trading card games? Maybe. It's a good idea. There are a number of designers who could create very interesting asymmetrical trading card games, with mechanics or dynamics completely different from those of **Netrunner**. But there are also quite a number who have had trouble designing balanced and fun symmetrical systems. I doubt asymmetrical game design makes the path any easier.

Clever Design and Limited Warfare

Unlike many other trading card games, **Netrunner** tightly limits the number of



actions each player is capable of performing on his or her turn. The Corp plays first, drawing a card and then taking three actions. The Runner gets four actions each turn. In general, each player has to spend an action to draw a card, play a card, or draw a bit (**Netrunner**'s economic unit) to pay for later actions. The Runner can also spend an action to initiate a run against the Corp.



Making a run is the game's key mechanic. I don't want to go deeply into describing this, but I wanted to note something that may surprise new players. With the exception of one or two last-ditch outs for the Runner, Netrunner does not let vou play surprise cards during the opponent's turn though the Corp frequently "rezzes" (reveals) previously played cards when the Runner attempts an attack on its assets. As the Corp player, you know what is hidden facedown on your data forts; the Runner can only play new cards as actions before initiating the run. Once the Runner is committed to a target, you can get a pretty good idea of whether or not the run will be successful by looking at the cards in play and the bits in players' pools. Not coincidentally, the format also avoids most of the timing conflicts and rules imbroglios that dog other trading card games.

There don't seem to be a huge number of possibilities for screwing up an opponent's plans unless he or she chooses to

give you the chance. If the Runner doesn't attack the Corp's data forts, the Corp will roll to an easy victory. On the other hand, the Corp can't directly mess with the Runner's existence unless a badly screwed-up run gives the Runner a "tag," exposing his or her resources to direct attack.

Victory Conditions

The players' methods of achieving victory differ, but their victory conditions are identical: score 7 Agenda points. These come from Agenda cards built into the Corp player's deck. The Corp gets points by protecting Agenda in data forts long enough to "advance" (score) them. Advancement costs bits, one per action, placed on the card. Usually, the more a particular Agenda is worth, the more bits and actions it takes to advance it—and the longer it is in danger from the Runner. The Runner scores points by stealing Agenda cards: making successful runs past the Corp's security measures. Thanks to the game's mechanics and the number of actions needed for advancement, the Runner almost always gets a turn between the time an Agenda has been installed and the time the Corp can score it.

Since game balance depends on the Runner having a good chance of stealing Agenda cards, strict rules govern the number of Agenda points allowed in the Corp's deck. The more Agenda the deck contains, the bigger it can be. Unlike some games' formulas for deck design, the Agenda-to-deck-size ratio is straightforward—as simple as making sure a poker deck contains 13 Hearts out of 52 cards.

The phrase "one-turn win" shouldn't have any place in **Netrunner**. I imagine a phenomenally unlucky Corp player who neglected to protect data adequately might lose the game on the Runner's first turn. But the Corp gets to play first, and the odds of the Runner lucking into this situation would be quite low. No, let me modify that: a daring Corp player who uses a small deck in order to quickly lay hands on Agenda runs the risk of handing everything to the Runner early. Well, if you want all the solid gold goodies, you naturally risk a cyberjack up the beanstalk.

Ease of Play

WotC's experience with **Magic** seems to have encouraged them to aim for a rule-book that's airtight against the noxious fumes emitted by game-crocking rules lawyers. The **Netrunner** rules have been

written and rewritten and edited and re-edited to be as precise as possible. If you read them carefully, you're not going to have any trouble playing the game. But I suspect that the extremely precise language and use of terminology may boggle a few readers on their first pass.

Even so, **Netrunner** is an exceptionally easy game to learn. The menu of choices is so simple and obvious that beginning players should have little difficulty getting into the flow of the game quickly. You can learn in five minutes from a player who already understands the rules. Add the time it takes to play a game to pick up some of the nuances, and you'll have the mechanics down pat.

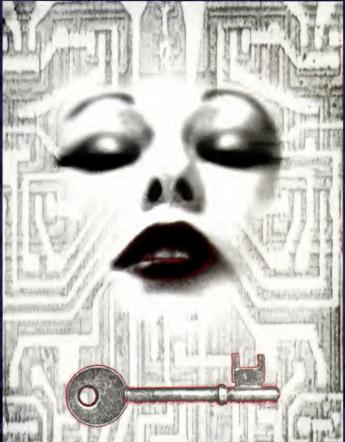
The Rewards of Skilled Programming

Netrunner may have something in common with RoboRallyTM,

Richard Garfield's other programmingoriented game. I love **RoboRally**. But I've had some problems finding players, because most of my friends outside the gaming industry are right-brained types who have trouble telling their right from their left. I've noticed that certain people, notably computer programmers, think ahead so well in **RoboRally** that they leave nearly all competition inthe dust.

My limited experience leads me to believe that **Netrunner** may have a similar dynamic: a player who is significantly brighter, or who is better tuned in to the game's economies, than his or her opponent will have a big advantage. This may be most telling in deck design, which I've started calling "programming." If you know your deck's capabilities and have programmed it well, you'll have a very good idea of how it should be per-

forming after only a few turns. The opponent's actions can obviously screw things up, but if that person isn't quite up to your caliber of programming, you'll probably be able to beat him or her soundly.



I believe that this is inherent in games that require a high degree of skill in deck design and card play: the fact is that a skilled deck designer with a grasp of tactical play will often crush a player who is not as skilled. Conversely, games between equally matched opponents are almost always great fun (as in Shadowfist, the game I'm most involved with). It's possible that some players will have the same type of problems with Netrunner. Their somewhat-more-skilled buddies may toast them over and over again. Happily for the less skilled of us, there's also an element of luck, and a Runner or Corp may be able to pull out wins that are completely against the odds. And of course, you get a second chance with your other deck that was sidelined the game before...

Cyber, Yes. Punk-Not Really.

When literary critics and their more entertaining kindred, the sci-fi critics, slashed into the cyberpunk genre, one of their chief complaints was that it was

> dehumanizing and didn't offer any real heroes. Some said it was more concerned with stringing together cool product names than developing believable characters. For my money, these criticisms ignored the best products of the cyberpunk shtick: work by Gibson, Sterling and Effinger, Sci-fi magazines, literary journals, and rock 'n' roll fanzines have also killed a lot of trees trying to figure out if the "punk" in cyberpunk makes any sense.

I'll avoid the debate except for one observation: the punk in **Netrunner** is only chrome-deep. If you're a fan of R. Talsorian's *Cyberpunk* 2020™, the licensed property for this entry in the **Deckmaster**® line, this may or may not be the card game you're looking for.

Netrunner takes the high electronic road where other cyberpunk games take the gritty low alley. I'm not convinced the world needs a trading card game about the street-level adventures of Rockerboys, Street Samurai, and Fixers. If you're yearning for that product, keep on dreaming, because this isn't it.

I'm not familiar enough with *Cyberpunk* to say whether **Netrunner** captures the specific nuances of its vision. I suspect that the answer is "Yes." Even if not, I certainly find this simulation of netrunning to be cool and evocative enough that I'm not hungry for another card game version.

What's Cool ...

And yes, many **Netrunner** cards are cool. I won't comment much on them because I know that many of the illus-



trations and flavor text pieces may change before final publication.

Some of the card art rocks. Other pieces in the cards I've got don't rock; they rot. Your opinion may hinge on your personal reaction to computer graphics. I love some of the game's conventional art—it's very good. On the other hand, only a few of the computer pieces strongly appealed to me. But I showed the cards to my girlfriend and she oohed and ahhed over most all the cards. Looks like a matter of taste.

Happily, the flavor text is definitely to my taste. Some of it is very funny. If you're into coffee-dark humor, you'll be reading many of these cards out loud to your opponents as you play them. Of course, if you have even the smallest touch of irony in your system, you're going to find it hard not to notice special poignancy in the flavor text of certain Corp cards, such as Corporate Downsizing: "'Rightsizing.' The word is 'rightsizing.'

The View from Afar

Netrunner doesn't rely on visceral personal identification with one's cards. "Visceral personal identification" is a lot of syllables referring to most players' emotional involvement in a game. Trading card games, like RPGs, often function as personality tests. When Magic appeared, my girlfriend wouldn't play anything but black, and chortled disturbingly every time she threw down another Terror. I know On The Edge™ fans who play nothing but Kergillians, and Shadowfist™ players who gravitated to the Guiding Hand and the Dragons the moment they saw the game.

Will players develop a special affinity for Black Ops Corp decks or samurai-style Runner decks? I dunno, but I'd be surprised if Netrunner inspired such factional totemism. I suspect that some players will develop emotional ties to some of these tropes, but not many. Emotional identification with the tools isn't the point, particularly since you are strongly encouraged to play well-balanced decks that can cope with the full range of possibilities. Biasing your deck too far towards one type of card doesn't seem wise.

As far as I can tell, in **Netrunner** the play is the thing. I doubt that serious players will be able to afford overly committing to one strategy over another-not without varying their approach to throw off the competition, anyway. Deck design seems to pivot on questions of utility, not gameworld context: that's already built into the two deck types. In keeping with cyberpunk pragmatic utilitarianism, both players would be well advised to use whatever gets the job done. If it seems cool as well as effective, that's a bonus.

Netrunner and the Queen of Games

I've been wondering if a trading card game would appear that reminded me of chess, with its requirement of skillful forethought and strategy. My initial impression is that Netrunner is that game. Its tightly restricted actions and its high degree of advance planning point to a highly structured game that may play somewhat like two computer programs running against each other. The duel feels more cerebral and impersonal than the multiple deaths, life-point damage, and smoking combat that characterize most other games.

On the other hand, if you've pitted the same decks against each other a few times and keep coming up empty, you can go back to the programming pool to try out new ideas on that opponent who has been outdesigning and outplaying you. That's an option chess won't give you, which is why I no longer play chess but expect to enjoy Netrunner. If you and your friends enjoy staying up until 3 A.M. yelling "One more game!" after yet another close duel, this should be a welcome addition to your table.

When Rob Heinsoo's girlfriend Lisa is winning the custody battle, he spends his time in the Olympic Peninsula rainforest where she teaches environmental education. But lately Lisa has been losing the custody battle to Rob's boss, Jose, at Daedalus Entertainment, Inc., in Seattle, where Rob co-designs Shadowfist expansions such as NetherworldTM and Flashpoint™, dabbles in netrepping, and helps develop the upcoming FENG SHUI™: The Shadowfist Roleplaying Game line.

Netrunner: Looking Ahead

Intrigued by Netrunner? Look for the game to be in stores in April of this year. The double-deck starters, containing one sixty-card Corporation deck and one sixty-card Runner deck, retail for \$18.95; fifteen-card boosters, containing a mix of Corp and Runner cards, go for \$2.95.

For more pre-release information about the game, check out the Netrunner section on the WotC World Wide Web page (http://www.wizards.com).

The launch of Netrunner will be accompanied by an online contest. In conjunction with Sendai Publishing, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., is presenting "Webrunner: The Hidden Agenda." Contestants will assume the role of a netrunner and will need to crack seven "code gates"; those who successfully do so will qualify to win prizes, including a laptop computer with a Pentium processor, and 28.8K bps modems. The contest will begin in March and will run for four weeks on Sendai's Nuke Web site (http://www.nuke.com).

The Duelists' Convocation won't be neglecting the game, either: Netrunner tournament rules are in the works, and plans are being made for DC-sanctioned Netrunner events later this year. The team is eager to release extensive support materials for the game, including a players' guide and a regular section in The Duelist. Best of all, a Netrunner expansion is also in the works; look in upcoming issues of The Duelist for more details!



THE ART OF NETRUNNER®: Pushing the Boundaries

by Jennifer Clarke Wilkes

ith Netrunner, the state of the art of Deckmaster® games has advanced considerably. Derived from the Cyberpunk 2020TM world created by R. Talsorian, the dark and futuristic subject matter of this new trading card game called for a style far different from that of either Magic or V:TES, and the setting demanded a unique graphic presentation. The card borders feature hardware backgrounds, colorful software keys, and computer-based icons. Within these borders, and pushing beyond them, is the exciting artwork that captures the high-tech, hardedged feel of the cyberpunk genre.



The look and feel of **Netrunner** was dictated partly by R. Talsorian's treatment of the **Cyberpunk 2000** roleplaying game over the years, and partly by the inspiration of the **Netrunner** design team at Wizards of the Coast. As **Netrunner** developer Tom Wylie described the two visions: "R. Tal's general direction was that the world be harsh, gritty, metallic, etc. It is not a nice place, and the art should reflect this. [Wizards of the Coast's] R&D wanted to take more of a *film noir* approach to the setting...more reminis-

cent of a Hitchcock film than your average Stephen King piece. There should be subtleties in the art's content, rather than the truth screaming in your face all the time."

To achieve this vision, the two companies jointly commissioned the artwork for the game. On Wizards of the Coast's side, Tom was involved a great deal with the art directors to communicate illustration needs and describe the game world to the artists. So carefully was the look of the game coordinated with that world that Tom's role took on an element of art direction. "It became clear I would need to take a more active role in the flow of information, and this eventually led to my assigning some of the art and to approving (or rejecting) the art that came in."

Looking out for the *Cyberpunk 2020* end of things was David Ackerman, the art director for **Netrunner** at R. Talsorian Games. He worked closely with Maria Cabardo (senior art director at WotC) and Tom Wylie, then later with Maria's successor on the project, Craig Cooper. The particular requirements of computer-generated art necessitated building up a stable of artists able to tackle those demands successfully; while there were some problems at first, "in general the process has moved quite smoothly...I found the WotC team to be very helpful and open."

At least half, probably more, of the art for the game is computer generated. R. Talsorian's art specifications called for features of Netspace, such as Corp icons and various types of programs, to be so rendered. Several of the cards were based directly on elements of the RPG; in those cases, the illustration was dictated narrowly. In general, however, the artists were allowed a fair amount of latitude.

As with Magic card art, "the artists were free to interpret the requirements for the illustration as they wished. Sometimes they would turn in pieces that didn't meet the requirements, but that worked well enough in general that we either moved the art or changed the card," Tom adds. "R. Tal could also reject art that was clearly based on the RPG if it inaccurately represented that game—and they did reject a few pieces for these reasons."

Still, Ackerman recognized the need for some compromise. While R. Tal's internal art guidelines for the RPG are very strict, he understood that this project would be introducing new artists as well as new players to the genre, and was therefore willing to be more open about artistic interpretation. Ackerman realized that, despite the divergence of some art from the boundaries established by R. Tal, exciting imagery would do a lot to attract new consumers who were not immersed in the cyberpunk setting. "We're pretty jaded: we've been in the cyberpunk industry a long time.... If we're getting that 'Cool!' response from the art, that's what we want."

A QUICK TOUR OF NETSPACE

Some of the game's most striking pieces depict the virtual-reality icons of Netspace. In the *Cyberpunk* setting, computer programs are rendered as three-dimensional images, giving this electronic environment the illusion of solidity. Ice (the Corporation's counter-intrusion software) typically has a frightening appearance, while the Runner's icebreaking programs often have mythological or literary features.

One of the more mystical images of Netspace is Mark Poole's illustration for CyfermasterTM, an icebreaking program. Given only the card's title, Mark conceived of a "sort of Oriental" figure. He used KPT BryceTM (illustration software) in combination with Adobe Photoshop® and Poser®, which models human anatomy.

Mark's intent was to create a humanoid image, "not a hundred percent human but computer-rendered," that clearly inhabited Netspace. He posed the figure in the lotus position to emphasize the Eastern theme. To enhance the mysticism of the piece, Mark added runic forms conjured by the program that symbolize computer data.



CYFERMASTERTM illustration by Mark Poole

Probably the best-known piece of **Netrunner** art is Microtech 'Trode Set by Randy Gallegos. Featured in advance advertising for the game, this art successfully evokes its moody high-tech setting.

When Randy was given the assignment, he made a point of not just illustrating the item of equipment by itself. "I've always really disliked that style of painting. I thought I'd show someone actually wearing the set." Wanting to capture the proper atmosphere of a 'runner making an all-night trip through Netspace, he decided to focus on the face. "I wanted to get a good feeling of that entranced look," Randy explains.

The model for the painting was Randy's longtime friend, Chris, who had introduced him to the Internet eight years earlier and continues to be his link to the world of computers. Randy photographed Chris in the studio, then added the eerie glow from the computer screen, as well as the various cables and the distinctive logo on the headset.



MICROTECH TRODE SET illustration by Randy Gallegos

WE'VE GOT...PERSONALITY

The art also captures the diverse and bizarre personalities of the **Netrunner** world. Some characters are ruthless Corp sysops, dedicated to hunting down the rogue 'runners; others are the Netspace hackers and cowboys trying to expose the Corp's activities, for personal motives ranging from idealism to quick profit. Then there are the AIs, some administrative and some rogue, whose nature and goals are hard to fathom.

Omni Kismet, Ph.D., is a Corp sysop who can rearrange ice nearly spontaneously to confound the Runner. The name is an anagram of Mike Pondsmith, the president of R. Talsorian Games. Lisa Pondsmith (Mike's wife) provided a photograph of Mike, which artist Doug Shuler used as the basis of the painting.

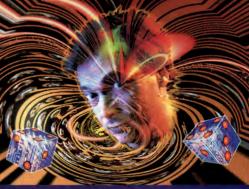
For Doug, the most important requirement was that the picture look like Mike. Because the name included the title "Ph.D.," Doug decided to surround the character with computer equipment, but painted this very simply so as not to distract attention from the face: "I wanted him to be the focus."



OMNI KISMET, PH.D. illustration by Douglas Shuler

Another distinctive personality is the Playful AI, who is quirky and unpredictable, but potentially helpful to the Runner. Artist Pete Venters was intrigued by the card idea: "The art description simply stated that the Artificial Intelligence would delay you to play games with it." But his initial attempts at finding a suitable model were frustrated.

Then one day, while chatting with Pete about Netrunner, Richard Garfield mentioned that Playful AI was one of his favorite cards. Inspired, Pete secretly sought out photographs of Richard, and finally settled on a series of shots done for WotC a few months earlier. He tweaked a promising image using Adobe Photoshop, adjusting the facial contours and lighting to produce the mischievous smile he wanted. The background was a series of circuits manipulated to produce odd patterns, so that the face seems projected from the center.

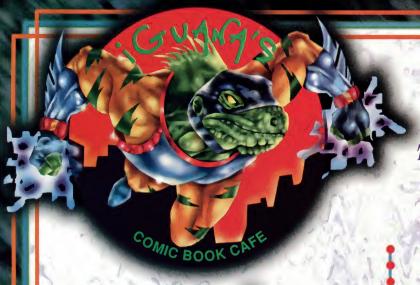


PLAYFUL AI illustration by Pete Venters

All this was done while Richard was away from the office. When he returned, "I handed him an envelope with 'Playful AI' written on it and told him I thought he'd be interested to see it.... When he opened it and saw what the final image was, you should have seen his eyes bug! He laughed a lot! He still has the copy pinned up by his desk."

Jennifer Clarke Wilkes is the Goblin Editor for Wizards of the Coast.





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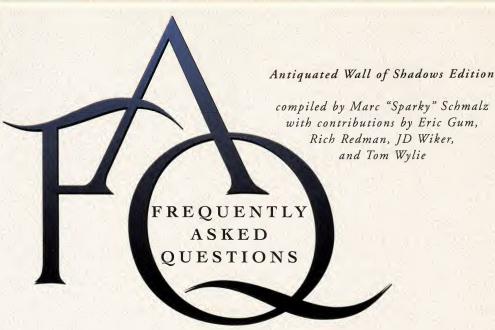
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NON-RULES Q&A

1) Q: What motivated you to reprint cards from previous expansions to create *Chronicles*TM?

A: Magic: The Gathering® has seen a great explosion in popularity, so there are a lot of newer players who don't have access to some of the out-of-print cards that enrich the game. For this reason, we decided to create a set that reprinted some of those cards. Having many options in deck-building is a large part of what makes Magic enjoyable, and we believe that, with Chronicles, we are expanding the play possibilities. Many players, however, have raised some important issues concerning collectability with Chronicles and nothing further will happen with the set until those issues have been addressed.

2) Q: How did you choose which cards would be in the set? A: First, we limited Chronicles to cards from Arabian
Nights™, Antiquities™, Legends™, and The Dark™. None of the out-of-print cards from Unlimited™ were considered, and
Fallen Empires™ was too recent a release too include. Then we looked for cards that are powerful and useful, but not overly powerful (Blood Moon and City of Brass are good examples). We also looked for cards that are especially fun to play with or are popular with players, even though they might not be the most useful cards in top-level tournament play (the Elder Dragon Legends are examples of this). In general, we avoided exceptionally complicated cards or cards that required a lot of bookkeeping. After considering all of these factors, we created the list of cards that would go into Chronicles.

3) Q: What effect does *Chronicles* have on the Duelists' Convocation's sanctioned Type II tournaments?

A: The purpose of the Type II environment is to provide the most expansive play environment that is fair for both veteran and new players. Accordingly, competitors should be able to construct a deck with cards from any card set that is readily available. Since Chronicles is a new rotating series and not a normal expansion, The Duelists' Convocation has decided to modify the basic design of Type II. Beginning November 1, 1995, the Type II tournament format was modified to permit players to build decks using cards from all currently available limited-edition expansions and stand-alone expansions. Quoting from the latest Type II rules: "Type II tournament decks may be constructed from Magic: The Gathering cards from the most current edition of the basic set, any current extensions of the basic set, and all limited-edition Magic expansions which are currently available." This, of course, includes cards from Chronicles, which is an extension of the basic set.

4) Q: Why did you reprint so many "Summon Legend" cards when you're only allowed one in any tournament deck? A: Again, changes have been made to Type I and II tournament systems, this time to allow more than one legend and legendary land card in a deck, starting November 1, 1995. Players should note that even though they may have up to four summon legend or legendary land cards of the same name in their decks, only one

summon legend or legendary land card of the same name may be in play at one time, as per the original Legends rule.

5) Q: Why did you reprint all the Urza's land cards instead of just one of each piece of art?

A: The Urza's land cards were each planned as a Common 4 card, meaning that, on a sheet of 121 common cards, four of them would be an







Urza's land card. We had the choice of putting one piece of art in four times or printing all the variations of the card. We thought players and collectors would appreciate the variety more than getting the same piece of art over and over.

6) Q: In *Chronicles*, Wall of Shadows has the *Antiquities* expansion symbol, but wasn't it from *Legends?*

A: Yes. Wall of Shadows was mistakenly printed with the Antiquities expansion symbol (=) instead of the Legends expansion symbol (=). It should be read as having the Legends symbol.

7) Q: Why did you reprint Jeweled Bird, an ante card, when all ante cards are banned from tournament play?

A: First, ante is part of the Sealed-Deck official tournament rules, so Jeweled Bird is useful in that tournament format. Also, some people like to play for ante outside of the Duelists' Convocation tournament structure, and we want to support that aspect of the game for those players.

8) Q: Where can I get a full Chronicles card listing?

A: We printed the complete Chronicles card list in Duelist #6, and it is also part of the complete Magic card list accompanying Duelist #8. In addition, you can get a Chronicles card list from our World Wide Web pages. The URL for the checklist is: http://www.wizards.com/Magic/Chronicles/Chronicles_list.html You can also send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with a request for the list to:

Wizards of the Coast Attn: Card List Requests P.O. Box 707 Renton, WA 98057-0707

9) Q: Where do I get the Rabid Wombat sound bite?

A: The Rabid Wombat sound bite is located on America Online in the GCS File Library under GCS Publications. Other requests for the sound file should be sent to sparky@wizards.com, and should include a specification for either a Macintosh sound file or a DOS .wav file. All replies will contain unencoded files.

RULES Q&A

1) Q: Since Stangg is a "Summon Legend" card and the rules say that copies of summon legend cards are sent to the grave-yard, why can I produce a copy of Stangg using its ability? A: The name of the token creature you produce with Stangg's ability is actually Stangg Twin. Because the token and the card don't share the same name, the Stangg Twin is not a "copy" of Stangg, and there is no conflict in having both in play. However, when

you use a card such as Clone to make a duplicate of Stangg or Stangg Twin, you get a "Summon Legend" card with the same name of one already in play. That's why, in those instances, the copy would be sent to the graveyard.

2) Q: I find Recall confusing. How do I play it?

A: Recall costs XX b to cast, and the text says, "Choose and discard X cards from your hand to take X target cards from your graveyard and put them into your hand." X is the number of cards you want to get from the graveyard, and since X is in the casting cost twice, you must pay two mana of any color for each card you want to discard and replace. This means that in order to cast Recall to get two cards from your graveyard, you must pay twice the number of cards you wish to remove plus b, for a total of 4 b.

3) Q: Does my opponent have to tell me which cards she is going to get from her graveyard when she uses Recall?

A: Yes The spell states that the player is taking target cards from

A: Yes. The spell states that the player is taking target cards from the graveyard, and all targets must be announced when the cost of a spell is paid.

4) Q: Do City in a Bottle and Golgothian Sylex affect *Chronicles* cards from the *Antiquities* and *Arabian Nights* expansions?

A: Yes. Both City in a Bottle and Golgothian Sylex read that all cards from a particular expansion must be discarded. Since references to cards from an expansion refer to all cards with the appropriate expansion symbol, this includes any Chronicles cards with that expansion symbol.

5) Q: Enchantment Alteration switches a target enchantment from one creature or land to another. It also says to treat the altered enchantment "as though it were just cast on the new target." Does this mean that I can get life by powering my Crystal Rod if I move a blue enchantment, or that I get to draw a card because of my Verduran Enchantress?

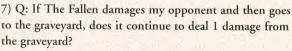
A: No. If an effect says to treat a card as if it were just cast, that card starts over with a clean slate. All counters are removed, the effects of interrupts and other spells are erased, etc. Anything the card does when it enters play happens again, but effects that are triggered by the successful casting of the spell, or external effects that are triggered by the permanent entering play, do not trigger.

In the same way, if a Krovikan Fetish is moved to another creature by Enchantment Alteration or Crown of the Ages, the Fetish's controller will get to draw a card during his or her next upkeep, but effects such as Verduran Enchantress and Throne of Bone will not trigger.

6) Q: Enchantment Alteration states that "the controller of the [moved] enchantment does not change." What does this mean?

A: The original controller of an enchantment is the person who cast it. So if you use Enchantment Alteration to move your opponent's enchantment from one of her creatures to one of yours, you do not gain control of the enchantment. For example, it's perfectly

legal to cast Firebreathing (2: Target creature Firebreathing enchants gets +1/+0 until end of turn) on your opponent's creature if you choose, and since you are the controller, only you can spend 2 on the enchantment, even though it enchants your opponent's creature. Some spells don't require any decisions, however. For example, Giant Strength (target creature gets +2/+2) doesn't require that the controller activate it after it has resolved. Therefore, if you use Enchantment Alteration to move your opponent's Firebreathing enchantment from one of his creatures to one of yours, you cannot pump that creature up using Firebreathing. If you were to move Giant Strength instead, your creature gains the +2/+2, even though



the enchantment is still controlled by your opponent.

A: No. Once The Fallen is removed from play, it ceases to produce this effect, since no cards produce effects from the graveyard.

8) Q: With Book of Rass, I can pay 2 life to draw a card. Is it possible to go below 0 life points?

A: Yes. It's possible to go below 0 life points by damage, but you cannot lose or spend more life than you have; therefore, you could not use Book of Rass to go below 0 life.

9) Q: The Craw Giant has "rampage: 2." What does that mean? A: You can find the description of Rampage on page 39 of the



Fourth Edition™ rules, page 41 of the Ice Age™ rules, and both pages B-41 and B-78 of The Pocket Players' Guide for Magic: The Gathering—Fourth Edition®. In brief, when defense is chosen, an attacking creature with "Rampage: X" gets +X/+X until the end of the turn for each creature beyond the first assigned to block it. The X varies but is defined on the rampaging creature's card. Rampage, like trample, has no effect unless the creature attacks. So since the Craw Giant has a rampage of 2, it would gain +2/+2 for every creature beyond the first which blocks it. If two creatures block the Craw Giant, it would gain +2/+2 until the end of the turn, and if three creatures blocked it, it would gain +4/+4.

10) Q: If I cast Weakness on Rabid Wombat, what happens? A: You need to simultaneously apply both the penalty from Weakness and

both the penalty from Weakness and the Rabid Wombat's bonus for having an enchantment on it; Weakness makes it -2/-1 and the Wombat's ability adds +2/+2, so the net change would be +0/+1.

11) Q: How does Takklemaggot work?

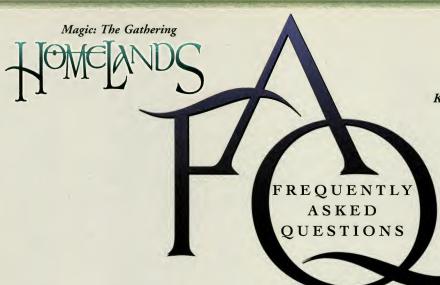
A: Takklemaggot is pretty straightforward until it starts moving. If the creature which Takklemaggot enchants is placed in the graveyard for any reason, Takklemaggot doesn't leave play like most enchantments. Instead, the controller of the enchanted creature gets to pick a new target

for the enchantment. This creature can be any valid target creature in play, both that player's own creature or an opponent's creature. Takklemaggot's controller doesn't change during this. If Takklemaggot is destroyed or if the creature which Takklemaggot enchants is removed from play without going to the graveyard, Takklemaggot's moving effect isn't triggered, and the enchantment is put into the graveyard.

Things get more tricky if there are no valid target creatures onto which you can move Takklemaggot. When this happens, Takklemaggot becomes a global enchantment, targeting the player who controlled the last creature enchanted by Takklemaggot. This new incarnation of Takklemaggot deals I damage to that player during every upkeep. Takklemaggot never reverts to being an enchant creature card after this change.







Koskun-Falls-in-a-Barrel Edition

compiled by Charlie Catino, Christopher Ferris, and Marc "Sparky" Schmalz with assistance from Adam Conus, Eric Gum, Rich Redman, JD Wiker, and Tom Wylie

1) Q: Who designed Homelands TM?

A: Kyle Namvar and Scott "Scooter" Hungerford are the creators. Full credits were published on p. 13 of Duelist #7.

2) Q: What is the *Homelands* expansion symbol supposed to be?

A: It's a globe representing the world of Ulgrotha, the setting for Homelands.

3) Q: Does Didgeridoo let me bring an Anaba Bodyguard into play?

A: No. Didgeridoo states that it will let you bring minotaurs into play. Anaba Bodyguard is a "Summon Bodyguard" card, not a "Summon Minotaur" card.

4) Q: Can Abbey Matron use its ability to give other creatures a +0/+3 bonus?

A: No. That ability only works on the Abbey Matron since the description of the ability doesn't mention a target.

5) Q: An-Zerrin Ruins affects creatures of a certain type. What is a valid creature type for An-Zerrin Ruins?

A: Anything following the word "Summon" on the card type is a valid type. Choosing "Rat" would affect Bog Rats, Pestilence Rats, and Plague Rats since they are all "Summon Rat" cards. Choosing "Spirit," on the other hand, is not enough to affect Blinking Spirit since it is a "Summon Blinking Spirit" card and not a "Summon Spirit" card. Plurals of a creature type are also affected, so if you choose "Goblin," neither "Summon Goblin" nor "Summon Goblins" cards would untap. Currently, the only exception to this general rule is that choosing "Legend" would affect both "Summon Legend"

and "Summon Elder Dragon Legend" cards because "Summon Elder Dragon Legends" cards, through errata, are now referred to as "Summon Legend" cards. You can't use other descriptive words with An-Zerrin Ruins—for example, colors of cards, special abilities, "artifact," and "land"— because these aren't summon types.

6) Q: Who controls the Shadow token created by Broken Visage?

A: Regardless of who controlled the target creature that was buried, the player casting Broken Visage controls the Shadow token.

7) Q: Chain Stasis taps or untaps a target creature, and the controller of that creature can pay ② 6 to tap or untap an additional creature. After Chain Stasis has been cast, can I use Ley Druid to help generate the mana I need to untap additional creatures with Chain Stasis?

A: No. Chain Stasis will allow you to use interrupts that directly generate mana, and that's all. This includes tapping cards to produce mana and casting Dark Ritual, but does not include untapping land. Since the Ley Druid doesn't directly produce

mana, you cannot use its ability to generate mana for Chain Stasis.

8) Q: How much mana does it cost me to Spell Blast my opponent's Holy Strength when I have Irini Sengir (white enchantments and green enchantments each cost an additional 2 to cast) in play?

A: Irini Sengir (like Gloom) imposes an additional cost to the caster of spells without changing the actual casting cost on the card. This means that, despite the caster having to pay an additional 2it would still only cost 1 & to Spell Blast the Holy Strength, as the casting cost of Holy Strength is still just * (not 2 *).



9) Q: If my opponent and I both have Sengir Autocrats in play, when one of them leaves play, whose Serf tokens are buried?

A: Any time any Sengir Autocrat leaves play, bury all Serf tokens, no matter who controls them or whose Sengir Autocrat produced them. Likewise, when Drudge Spell leaves play, all Skeleton tokens are buried.

10) Q: If my opponent attacks with her Grizzly Bears, and I play Shrink (-5/-0 until end of turn) on it, are her Grizzly Bears 0/2 or -3/2? If later in the turn my opponent plays Giant Growth on the Bears, what is the creature's power and toughness?

A: The creature is -3/2, but any time a creature has a negative power, you simply treat it as 0 for all purposes except modifying its power. If Grizzly Bears has Giant Growth (+3/+3 until end of turn) cast on it later, it would be 0/5.

11) Q: I tap my Aysen Bureaucrats to tap my opponent's Dragon Whelp. My opponent responds to this fast effect by pumping up the Dragon Whelp's power to greater than 2. Does the Dragon Whelp become tapped?

A: No. Remember, fast effects resolve "last in, first out," and the target of the effect must be a legal target, both when the effect is declared and when it resolves. If a spell or card is not a legal target when the effect is declared, the effect cannot target it. If it is an illegal target when the effect resolves, the effect simply fizzles with regard to that target.

12) Q: If I target a green creature with Terror and my opponent responds by using the ability of the Willow Priestess (2 •: Target green creature gains protection from black until end of turn), will the Terror work?

A: No. Again, spells fizzle if they do not have a valid target when they're declared and when they resolve. In this case, when Terror resolves, it's targeting a creature with protection from black. Since creatures with protection from

black cannot be targeted by black spells, Terror fizzles.

13) Q: My opponent has Æther Storm in play, and I want to cast a summon spell, so I say I'm going to pay 4 life to bury Æther Storm. My opponent responds to this by using Boomerang to return Æther Storm to her hand. When the effects resolve "last in, first out," the Æther Storm returns to my opponent's hand before my effect can destroy it. Do I still lose the life?

A: Unfortunately for you, yes. Paying 4 life to bury Æther Storm is a cost that was paid as soon as you declared the effect. Just like mana spent

on a spell that is countered, you can't get the life back even though the effect fizzles. If you respond to Boomerang by spending another 4 life to bury Æther Storm, your last destruction effect will resolve before Boomerang, but you will have spent a total of 8 life.

14) Q: For Giant Albatross, when do I pay the cost to bury creatures that damaged it?

A: The effect of Giant Albatross is a triggered effect. The last sentence on the card explains that the only time you can use the effect is when Giant Albatross is "put into the graveyard from play."

Going to the graveyard triggers the ability, and you must pay the 10 then, or you cannot use the ability.

15) Q: If my opponent controls one of the *Homelands* "multilands" such as An-Havva Township and I control a Fellwar Stone, what colors of mana can the Fellwar Stone produce?

A: Your Fellwar Stone is capable of producing all the types of mana that your opponent's multiland can produce, including colorless mana.

16) Q: I control An-Havva Township while Mana Flare is in play. If I spend two colorless mana and tap the land to make one point of red mana, will Mana Flare force it to produce a second point of red mana?

A: Yes. If a land is producing mana, Mana Flare causes one more of the appropriate color to be added, no matter the activation cost or whether the land could produce other types; Mana Flare just duplicates the type produced.

17) Q: With Retribution, when does my opponent have to choose which creature is destroyed and which gets a -1/-1 counter?

A: All choices concerning a spell's targets are made when the spell is played, even if the opponent is choosing the targets; therefore,

when you play Retribution, you choose the two targets and your opponent chooses which one will be destroyed and which one will get a -1/-1 counter.

18) Q: If I enchant Autumn Willow with Instill Energy, will the enchantment disappear at the end of the turn since the card cannot be the target of spells or effects unless I spend •?

A: Once Instill Energy has resolved, it is a permanent (a creature enchantment) and is therefore unaffected by Autumn Willow's ability. When Instill Energy is cast, though, before it resolves, it is still considered a spell, and Autumn Willow's controller must spend • in order for Autumn Willow to be a legal target.



ARDSPOTIGHT

DWARVER WARRIORS

locking has its origins in the earliest days of Magic, long before the original Magic: The Gathering® was published. The idea that something could be unblockable followed soon thereafter, leading to the development of the spell Fear and abilities like flying and landwalk. None of these, though, provided an ironclad means of attacking unblocked. Fliers could be blocked by other fliers, landwalkers needed your opponent to be polite enough to play the requisite land type, and even Fear couldn't keep a creature from being blocked if the blockers were black or artifact creatures. Very late in the development phase, Richard introduced a creature that provided absolute unblockability: Dwarven Warriors.

Even though Dwarven Warriors was never playtested, it turned out to be a very intriguing card. Originally called Dwarven Miners, the card had just one simple function: to make creatures unblockable. The Miners quickly became Warriors after the artist, Douglas Shuler, submitted some pretty well-armored Miners, but the card's function remained the same. And the card only made little creatures unblockable, since any creature with a power of 3 or more would have been too much. So what's so special about Dwarven Warriors? Well, like many of the best cards in Magic, you can get a whole lot more out of the card if you work hard enough.



Dwarven Warriors offers you two basic tactics: one is to sneak a creature past blockers to deal damage to your opponent. Of course, if you can make a creature unblockable when it has low power and then increase its power dramatically, this is much more effective. The other tactic is to send in an unblockable



creature that will do something unpleasant to your opponent beyond damage the Hypnotic Specter's discard effect being a classic example. The first tactic, delivering unblocked damage, is a little more straightforward, so let's look at it first.

DIRECT DAMAGE

In a stalemate situation, having a Dwarven Warriors-Uthden Troll type of combination is decent enough, but the way to get the most out of Dwarven Warriors is to pummel your opponent

with more than 2 damage each turn. Some creatures are naturals for this, such as Carrion Ants or Frozen Shade. Both of these creatures have "inflatable" power, so with enough mana, you can be hitting your opponent for 6 or 7 damage each turn. Unblockability can be gratuitous, though, when you're dealing with an inflatable creature that has a toughness which increases along with its power (gratuitous, that is, if you aren't dealing with a regenerating blocker). Making an inflatable creature unblockable is far more crucial with creatures like Flame Spirit or Dragon Engine, which both have a fixed toughness, and is especially useful for creatures that require more than a little mana to pump up, like Thallid Devourer, Osai Vultures, or the poor, maligned Atog.

Having an inflatable creature is probably ideal, but there are many other ways to increase any creature's powereven if it's something simple like Firebreathing, Blessing, or some other to use creature enchantment. Another option is a creature or artifact that can boost the power of other creatures, such as Kieldoran Guard, Krovikan Elementalist, Dwarven Lieutenant, Ashnod's Battle Gear, Coral Helm, or Forbidden Lore. Unfortunately, this class of cards isn't very efficient at increasing the power of unblocked creatures, since these cards were designed primarily to give a decisive edge in combat between creatures. Using instants, though, you can power up an unblockable

creature efficiently by slapping down a
Giant Growth, a Blood
Lust, or even the big-ticket
card, Howl from Beyond. On a
creature with a low power and a high
toughness, Transmutation can be used
to the same effect.

Many global enchantments offer a way to increase power but avoid activation costs; the trick is to use enchantments that allow you to get around Dwarven Warriors' restriction. In red. Orcish Oriflamme is an obvious choice. giving your creatures +1/+0 when they attack. For true wackiness, though, use Tidal Influence from Fallen Empires™. This cycles blue creatures between -2/-0 and +2/+0, changing during upkeep. Just use Dwarven Warriors during any upkeep in which Tidal Influence's bonus is going to change a creature from eligible to ineligible or from ineligible to eligible (depending on if it's cycling up or down), but use the Warriors either before or after the bonus is applied (again, depending on if Tidal Influence is cycling up or down). For another example of strange manipulation, use Angelic Voices (all your creatures get +1/+1 as long as you only control white or artifact creatures) with either Shvft

or Alchor's Tomb (a card from Legends™ that can temporarily change the color of one of your permanents). With enough creative bookkeeping, you can get around almost any restriction.

You can also do creative shuffling with creature enchantments. Normally, the turn after a power-boosting enchantment is cast, the creature will no longer qualify for unblockability. For instance, if you make your Savannah Lions unblockable, cast Divine Transformation, and then attack, the Lions will be too big to be made unblockable again. With Magic, though, there's almost always a loophole. This particular one is Crown of Ages. Just have two or more 2/2 creatures and one

Feast of the Unicorn, and you're set.

Use Dwarven Warriors to make the creature without Feast of the Unicorn unblockable, and then

move the enchantment with the Crown, toggling it back and forth each turn.

This is far from an exhaustive list of the possibilities for sneaking a big attacker by your opponent, but here's one more dirty trick (probably my favorite) to use with Dwarven Warriors. When you cast Shapeshifter, set its power and toughness at 2/5. During your upkeep, make it unblockable, and then set it to 6/1. During your next upkeep, you can only attack with a 2/5 unblockable creature, because you can only alter its statistics once a turn, but you'll be hammering your opponent for an average of four unblocked points per turn. Other tricks can be made to work with unusual creatures, like Walking Wall, Tetravus, or even the Hyalopterous Lemure.

Unblockable Unpleasantness

Using your Dwarven Warriors to pile-drive unblocked attackers against your opponent is certainly effective, but there's another strategy that involves more finesse: you can use Dwarven Warriors to slip a "saboteur" behind enemy lines.

Saboteurs are a little tricky to define. They've appeared in every expansion except *Antiquities*[™], and they all share the basic characteristic that if they attack unblocked, they can cause all sorts of trouble. A more technical definition would be any creature that, if unblocked, gets some sort of additional ability. A simple example is Murk Dwellers, which gets +2/+0 if it attacks unblocked. Being a saboteur, though, may be a function of the creature dealing damage (Hypnotic Specter), the creature *not* dealing damage (Rysorian Badger), or even using up and sacrificing the creature (Necrite).

All of these cards are begging to be used with Dwarven Warriors—not only do they get a bonus for attacking unblocked, all of the creatures mentioned so far have a power of two or less. There are also many combinations for saboteurs and Dwarven Warriors: Hypnotic Specter and The Rack; Reef Pirates and Spoils of War; Farrel's Mantle, Krovikan Vampire, and Ghosts of the Damned; Whirling Dervish and Staff of Zegon; Orcish Squatters and Dwarven

Armory. An entire article could be written detailing the fun and twisted combinations that are possible, but more important is deciding which ones to put in your deck in the first place, and why.

Throwing random saboteurs in a deck is fun, but you're better off making them part of your overall strategy, using Dwarven Warriors to maximize their effectiveness. Hypnotic Specter's ability is always useful because it encourages your opponent to play with no cards in hand, but other saboteurs are less universally useful. For instance, Merchant Ship, a 0/2 creature from Arabian Nights® that gives you 2 life if unblocked, should only be considered for a deck with which you're trying to gain a lot of life. Floral Spuzzem, a 2/2 creature from Legends that can destroy an artifact if unblocked, is only necessary if you have no other way of dealing with artifacts. (Floral Spuzzem is reusable, though, unlike most anti-artifact cards.) In the same way, Farrel's Zealot is for a deck that doesn't pack many Terrors and Disintegrates, and Mindstab Thrull doesn't help much if your Hymn to Tourachs and Abyssal Specters have already cleaned out your opponent's hand.

Careful assessment of your saboteurs becomes even more important with Reef Pirates and all the poison counter creatures (Marsh Viper, Pit Scorpion, and the tokens created by Serpent Generator). These cards suffer from "all or nothing" phenomenon, and with them it's helpful to remember that there are only so many ways to defeat an opponent and none of them intersect. Damage to your opponent is not cumulative with poison counters, nor is that cumulative with running your opponent out of cards. This means you can bring your opponent down to 2 life, get rid of all but three cards in his library, give him nine poison counters, and still lose. That's a lot of wasted effort. While a card like Millstone might help break a stalemate, you need to concentrate on just one method of defeating your opponent.

Deciding which saboteurs are most useful requires a lot of thought and analysis. Many saboteurs appear useful, but be careful with your selections. Nafs Asp, for

instance, isn't worth much as a saboteur since it's essentially a 1/1 creature for . Hypnotic Specter, on the other hand, is well worth it, without Dwarven Warriors. Delif's Cone is a Magic lemon, costing a card and unblocked damage for one turn just to gain a few life. You really only need to make The Fallen unblockable once, and then you can use Dwarven Warriors on other creatures. Pit Scorpion suffers from the Plague Rat weakness you can only put four of them and four Marsh Vipers in a tournament-legal deck. Also, Pit Scorpion costs 2 \$\frac{1}{4}\$ for a 1/1 creature that effectively gets +1/+0 if unblocked, but that damage is only cumulative with other damage from poison-counter creatures. Compare Murk Dwellers to Marsh Viper with this in mind, and you can begin to see the weakness of poison cards.

WARRIOR SUPPORT

Whether you focus on using Dwarven Warriors to deliver damage or to send in saboteurs, there are many cards that work well in a deck with Dwarven Warriors. Meekstone is the most basic one, since many of your creatures will have power less than 3 anyway. Also fitting in nicely are cards that form a defensive buffer in the midgame—cards like Castle, Hurricane, Elvish Hunter, Snow Fortress, Caverns of Despair, Illusionary Terrain, and so forth. If making creatures unblockable is a major part of your deck strategy, you'll probably want to do damage early on and then stall until midgame to deliver the coup.

When you pursue a Dwarven Warriors' strategy, though, one of the most important things to consider is

whether to use Dwarven Warriors at all. Not only does it limit one of your colors to red, Dwarven Warriors is a 1/1 creature, susceptible to dying in many ugly, horrible ways. Tawnos's Wand has the same function as Dwarven Warriors, but shares neither of these disadvantages. Given that they have the same ability, which one would you rather use, especially given that the average deck has far more ways to kill creatures than artifacts?

This analysis is, of course, loaded. Tawnos's Wand has a major disadvantage—it's expensive. At two mana per use, it's difficult to support more than one at a time; more than two is a virtual impossibility. What's worse is if you're using it with Howl from Beyond or a mana-intensive creature like Sea Spirit, every use of the Wand cuts your potential damage by 2.

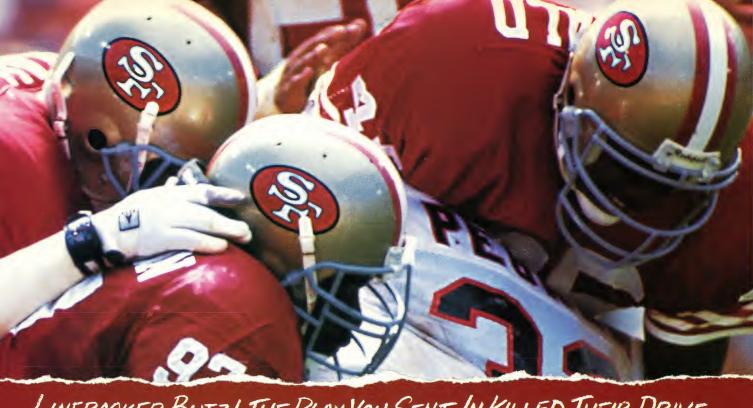
In the end, the best advice is to use a mix of the two. This way, you're adaptable and can recover whether your opponent has a deck heavy in creature-destruction or artifact-destruction. In **Magic**, having a broad range of options is a good practice, making it less likely you'll be nailed by some narrow card.

Aside from Dwarven Warriors and Tawnos's Wand, many other cards offer unblockability of one sort or another—Fear, Seeker, Invisibility, Trailblazer, Teleport, Sewers of Estark, and Runed Arch to name a few, not to mention all the cards that have to do with landwalking. All have their related strategies, each good for a subset of cards. Whether to use these cards instead of or in addition to Dwarven Warriors depends on your overall strategy. The major advantage of Dwarven Warriors is that it's reusable

and can be rotated between creatureswhen your opponent finally Incinerates your Dragon Whelp, you can bring out Murk Dwellers and use the Warriors on them. But are you better off making one creature unblockable or having the option of making many unblockable, as with Hidden Path, Aysen Highway, or Runed Arch? Will you use the movable unblockability for small creatures or risk the fixed creature enchantments of Fear, Seeker, and Invisibility to get an unblocked Shivan Dragon? Does your deck call for multiple uses of unblockability, or is it better to surprise your opponent with a few big hits from Teleport, Trailblazer, or Sewers of Estark? Do you want limited unblockability or total but hard-to-achieve unblockability using Leshrac's Rite and Orcish Farmers, or Burrowing, Rainbow Vale, and Blood Moon? These are decisions you'll have to come to on your own, and the answer is that many of them are worthy. But of them all, I believe Dwarven Warriors carves out the most versatile and widely usable niche.

Despite placing tenth out of eleven in the first Magic tournament ever, Chris Page's Magic career has been pretty respectable. An outspoken apologist for white, Chris always makes his opinions known, whether he's writing for The Duelist or working on an upcoming Magic expansion.





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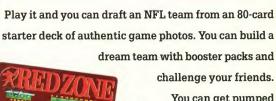








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EXCUSE TRANSPORTER OF THE SUITCASE.

by Paul Peterson

EXPANDING YOUR POTENTIAL WITH HOMELANDS

ow you've done it. Like every other Magic™ player, you'd been looking forward to the release of the new expansion for months. So when Homelands™ finally debuted, you immediately bought a box. When you asked Mr. Suitcase what you should do with all your new cards, he told you to play with them, of course. He explained that if you took the time to really explore all the cards in each new expansion and incorporate them into your decks, you'd really have the edge over other players. That sounds great, but you need a starting place. How do you learn toplay with the latest Magic expansion?

There are two basic ways to make a new Magic expansion part of your game play. The first and most common approach is to incorporate the new cards into your existing decks. Magic expansions are meant to be just that: card sets which expand the possibilities of the current game world. They deliberately build on themes from previous sets, adding cards that either complement or counter existing strategies. That means that any existing deck, even the most well-tuned one, may benefit from the addition of cards from the most current expansion. And, as any good player knows, even if you don't take advantage of new deck technology, your opponents certainly will-especially Mr. Suitcase.

But how do you find new cards that will fit into a tried and true deck? First, look at the purpose of the deck. If the deck was put together the way Mr. Suitcase taught you, it's probably not hard to figure out how the deck is expected to work, and how each card contributes to that purpose. For example, does the deck rely on direct damage to lower your opponent's life total, or does it torment

your opponent with perpetual mana shortage by locking down his land? Once you've identified the goal of the deck and how the cards in the deck work towards that goal, you'll be able to look at the new expansion cards with an eye toward complementing that card mix, or even replacing some of the existing cards with something better from the new card set.

As an example, let's look at a deck Mr. Suitcase has been tinkering with recently: a white and blue "denial" deck. You've lost against this deck enough to know that its purpose is to prevent your opponent from successfully casting spells, responding to spells, attacking with creatures, or doing anything else effectively. This deck is built around several of each type of counterspell: Power Sink, Spell Blast, and, of course, Counterspell. These spells will prevent your opponent from casting any of the spells that are central to his deck. It also contains some white, creature-killing spells like Wrath of God and Swords to Plowshares. In combination with the counterspells, these will destroy any chance your opponent has to mount a successful creature attack. A few Millstones help cut off the opponent's most precious resource: his cards. Mr. Suitcase also included some other, gener ally useful blue and white cards: Balance, which can be pretty damaging to a creature-dependent deck, and is a good come-from-behind spell; Circle of Protection: Red, which helps defend against direct damage; and Portent, an extremely versatile spell which allows you to control the order in which you or your opponent gets cards (and the order in which you Millstone them away.)

Armed with a good sense of how the deck as a whole works, it's easy to identi-

fy several Homelands cards which might be fairly useful in it. Merchant Scroll, a sorcery that allows you retrieve any blue instant or interrupt from your deck, would be very handy for making sure you have the proper type of counterspell to suit your current mana distribution. Another good addition might be Memory Lapse. This is a blue interrupt that counters a target spell but sends the spell back to the top of the caster's library instead of to the graveyard. It not only stops an opponent's spell this turn, which is always annoying to an opponent; it also prevents your opponent from getting a new card next turn. This is really useful when your opponent has used up some finite resource (Dark Ritual, for example) to cast the spell in the first place, because it's less likely that she'll be able to cast the spell again next turn. It also works well with Millstone, since the countered spell can be Milled into the graveyard. If you can afford an upkeep of two white mana per turn, Serran Bestiary is another possibility. This card prevents a creature from attacking, blocking, or tapping to use an ability—essentially taking the creature out of the game.

dentifying the workable cards from a new expansion is only the first step in integrating them into your deck. Obviously, unless you want your deck to grow to a hundred cards, you have to make room for the new cards by removing others from the deck. In cases where a new card is a more powerful and more effective version of a card in the deck, the choice will be clear. Since few Magic cards are strictly better than others, though, incorporating the new cards involves figuring out which is best suited to the deck. Is there some particular problem you run into when playing the

Background by Julie Baroh and Amy Weber Spot illustration by Julie Baroh deck, or some strategy that utterly defeats yours? Look at the new cards to see if they can help. Think about how the new cards are different from the existing ones, and which will be more useful to you overall. Many cards have similar, but slightly different, effects. These subtle differences can be the deciding factor.

After you make your choices, test them carefully. Don't change too many things about the deck at once because if you do, you'll find it hard to identify what contribution each new card is actually making. Put a new card in place of an old, slightly different card, and play several games to decide which works better. If the substitution doesn't improve the deck, don't give up; instead try swapping the new expansion cards for different cards in the deck. This way you will tune the new cards into your deck, instead of just throwing them in.

In the case of his denial deck, Mr. Suitcase figured that Memory Lapse might be more flexible than his other counterspells. Therefore, he decided to add three Memory Lapses and to remove two Spell Blasts and Power Sink. He beat you even more quickly with the Memory Lapses in his deck, so he decided to keep them and put the other counterspells in his sideboard. Then he removed several Portents and substituted two Merchant Scrolls in their place. While Portent helps you filter the top three cards of your or your opponent's deck, Merchant Scroll lets you get a specific card from your library. In this particular deck, both are useful, so he decided to increase the flexibility of the deck by keeping a couple of each. He also tried adding Serran Bestiary but soon discovered that the upkeep costof two white mana prevented him from casting other white spells he needed, prompting him to leave the Bestiary out.

he other way to play with a new expansion is to see if you can build any decks based on new ideas contained in the expansion. Each new Magic set has introduced some card combinations or strategies that become key components in new kinds of decks. One advantage of building a deck around an expansion is that the cards in the set tend to work well together—after all, they are designed that way.

The key to this deck-building technique, of course, is identifying themes which the expansion develops. One easy way to do this is to look for a lot of creatures of the same type, or for cards which specifically affect that creature type. Good examples of this from Homelands are Faeries, Minotaurs, and Vampires. You should also look for cards that generate similar effects: Æther Storm and Feroz's Ban, for example, both make it more difficult to cast summon spells. (For an overview of : the basic themes in Homelands, see the article in Duelist #8, "And Now For Something Completely Different," by Homelands developer Charlie Catino.)

One good application of a Homelands theme is a deck based on Baron Sengir and the Sengir minions. A great creature by itself, Baron Sengir is a 5/5 flyer that gains +2/+2 if it kills a creature. The Baron also makes a great complement to Sengir Vampires, since you can tap it to regenerate a target Vampire. Grandmother Sengir is particularly useful with both of these cards. You can tap Grandmother Sengir to give a creature -1/-1—just the thing to get rid of that Serra Angel that would normally kill your Vampire. Also in the theme are rats and bats, the traditional companions of vampires. Sengir Bats are particularly appropriate, as they have the Vampire ability to gain +1/+1 counters when they kill creatures. And of course, what would the Baron want to carry himself and his guests around but a Black Carriage? This 4/4 trampler requires you to sacrifice a creature to untap it-but that's no problem with Sengir Autocrat in play to provide you with three 0/1 serfs to drive the Carriage. And just about any other undead nasty could also be at the Baron's beck and call, such as Skeletons and Shades.

While you are looking for themes in the expansion to build decks around, you should also try to identify cards which don't constitute a full-blown theme, but which might be the beginnings of one. Aysen Crusader, for example, has power and toughness equal to 2 plus the number of Heroes you control. Unfortunately, there are currently only three "Summon Hero" cards—the Benalish Hero, Beastwalkers, and Kjeldoran Warriors—and no other cards

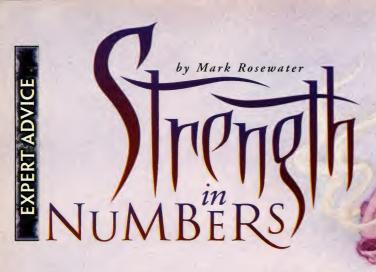
that currently help Heroes or Crusaders specifically. This doesn't mean that you can't build a deck around these cards; it just means that Heroes are not a fully developed theme—yet. Identifying these "proto-themes" may help you prepare for ideas in later expansions.

When a new expansion comes out, it can be very difficult to figure out exactly what to do with it. But if you take the time to explore it, to figure out which strategies it strengthens, and which themes it introduces to the game, you'll understand both the new cards and your old ones better. With a little work and some tinkering, you can turn those new cards into the latest way to best Mr. Suitcase—if he doesn't beat you to it.

When he's not writing about his alter ego, Mr. Suitcase, Paul Peterson is busy posing for vampire portraits and developing card sets for Vampire: The Eternal Struggle™.



DUELIST 43



magine walking into a grocery store, grabbing a cart and starting down an aisle. When you see food you want, you decide whether you want a little or a lot of it. If you decide you want a little, you rip open a bag and just take a handful. If you decide you want a lot, you sweep half the shelf into your cart. Then, as soon as your cart is full, you leave. While this might seem a rather odd way to shop, many Magic players use a similar method to build their decks.

This "all or nothing" syndrome has its roots in the official tournament rules established by the Duelists' Convocation. The rules restricting players to four of any particular card in tournament play were quickly adopted by the **Magic** community for general use. However, players have shown a tendency to go to the two extremes of these rules when constructing a deck. Usually, a **Magic** card is valued as either very important (in which case four of it are added to the deck in question) or only slightly important (in which case only one copy of it is added).

By focusing only on these extremes, players tend to limit the performance of their decks. It's not easy to determine when using one or four of a card is appropriate—and knowing when to use two or three can be even more difficult.

PLAYING THE NUMBERS GAME

Suppose you're building a tournament-legal, white weenie deck. You decide that the basic premise for your deck is that you want to quickly overwhelm your opponent with a swarm of tiny white creatures, pumped up to dangerous proportions with Crusades. When you have the advantage, you cast Armageddon (destroying all lands in play), keeping your opponent from casting any spells to stop you.

There are quite a few variations on the white weenie theme, each focusing on a slightly different set of cards, but after looking over your cards, you decide that there are six you definitely want to include: Armageddon, Crusade, Disenchant, Savannah Lions, Swords to Plowshares, and Wrath of God. The big question, though, is how many of each card do you need if you want to maximize the card's effect?

First and foremost, deck construction is a matter of probability. The more copies of a particular card in a deck, the higher the chance that the card will be drawn and the higher the chance you will draw more than one. The key, then, to deciding how many times a card needs to be in a deck depends directly on how many times you are going to want to draw it. To figure this out, you need to ask yourself the following questions each time you consider including a card:

1) Is this card central to the deck?

Before you can begin to construct, you need to decide what it is you want the deck to do. How will it defeat your opponent? If a card is instrumental to this design, then the deck will require multiple copies to ensure that the card appears often. For instance, if you are building a cheap, quick, red direct-damage deck, Lightning Bolts are critical, as they are instants and do the most damage for the least mana. You would probably want four of them in your deck, and, because the card is so instrumental, you might even consider adding similar cards like Incinerate or Chain Lightning. If you were building a slower, more expensive directdamage deck, using Mana Flares and X spells, Lightning Bolts would be less important and could be included in smaller numbers.

Putting this advice to use on the white weenie deck you're building, only three of the six cards you plan to include are essential to the deck's design: Armageddon (for setting up the killing blow), Crusade (for powering up your weenies), and Savannah Lions (for dealing moderate damage at a low cost). The other three, Swords to Plowshares, Disenchant, and Wrath of God, are useful but not necessary for the deck to run properly.

2) Do you want this card in your opening hand?

As any experienced **Magic** player knows, success in a particular duel depends heavily on how

Background by David Kimmel

44

good your opening hand is. Because this initial hand is so important, how you choose to build your deck needs to reflect what you want to see in your first eight cards. Ideally, you want your opening hand to consist of nothing but cards that will be useful during the first few turns. This means that you are going to want to limit any card that is not useful early, while adding extras of cards that you want to get right away.

In a fast, red/green creature deck, Llanowar Elves is the perfect example of a card that you would like to see in your opening hand. Llanowar Elves is not only very cheap to cast, but has an ability which is particularly useful in the early rounds of a duel. A Craw Wurm, on the other hand, is practically useless in the opening draw. With a casting cost of six, it will be at least three or four turns before you will be able to summon it (assuming that you have additional mana resources). Therefore, you obviously are going to want to include more cards like Llanowar Elves than cards like Craw Wurms, since drawing the former early aids the initial hand and drawing the latter just gums up your hand. There is a balance to be attained, though, as there are cards that you do want to draw later in the game. Just be careful to err on the side of getting cards a little later than you want rather than too early. Llanowar Elves may not be of much use late in the game, but a Craw Wurm too early is completely worthless. (Remember: you always have an early game, but you don't always have a late game.)

Applying these concepts to your white weenie deck, you'll notice that Armageddon and Wrath of God are the only cards which wouldn't be useful in your opening hand—both have a higher casting cost and are only good if there are targets in play worth destroying. The other cards, Crusade, Savannah Lions, Swords to Plowshares, and

Disenchant, are all potentially useful in the early rounds and cost either one or two mana. (Of these four, Disenchant has probably the least potential in the early game, as it is usually a few turns before you can be sure what you want to target with it.)

3) Do you need this card for a combination?

Often, a deck revolves around the interaction of a few key cards. Since it is the chemistry between these cards that provides the power of the deck, you need to put a larger numbers of these cards in to guarantee that all parts of the combination show up in your hand. Suppose, for instance, that you are building a black/white Pestilence deck. You should include multiple copies of Circle of Protection: Black and a large number of creatures with protection from black (e.g., White Knight, Order of Leitbur), as these cards make Pestilence more useful. Of course, you need to put in multiple copies of Pestilence as well, since you don't want to get all those other cards without getting Pestilence.

In your white weenie deck, you really only have one strong combination card, Crusade. This card's strength is based directly on the number of white weenie creatures you're using. Since the majority of the cards in the deck (all the creatures) benefit from Crusade, getting out even a single copy of it can mean as much as five or six points of extra damage when the white weenie horde is out in force (and will result in fewer casualties as well).

4) Is having two of this card in your hand useful?

There are actually several reasons why having two or more of a card might not be useful. First, the card might be a non-cumulative repetition. For instance, having two Circles of Protection: Red in play is only slightly more valuable than having just one, providing redundant protection against Disenchant. Second, a card may require the use of a limited resource. Strictly speaking, two Killer Bees are probably not going to be able to do any more damage than one. Third, the card's upkeep cost might make it prohibitively expensive to have more than one in play. You may be able to feed one Lord of the Pit, but two is

just asking for trouble.

In your white weenie deck, four out of the six cards—Crusade, Savannah Lions, Swords to Plowshares, and Disenchant—are useful as duplicates. The two hold-outs are Armageddon and Wrath of God; casting either of these spells twice in succession would be pointless.

5) How many decks is this card useless against?

The worst draw is one which is of no use against the particular deck you're facing. Always examine your cards to see if their usefulness can be negated by a particular deck type. A good example of this would be Winter Orb, which states that no player may untap more than one land during his or her untap phase. Usually used to shut down a player's mana production, this artifact is rather useless against a quick deck that requires minimal mana to function, such as a white weenie deck, or one that uses non-land sources of mana, such as Elves or Fellwar Stones. Be careful not to include too many of these cards and be prepared to have substitutes in your Sideboard to use when you run into that dangerous deck type.

For this question, the biggest concerns in your white weenie deck are Swords to Plowshares and Wrath of God. Both prove useless against a creatureless deck, although it's possible to use Swords to Plowshares on your own creature if you really need life. While still useful against most decks, you should probably keep these cards to a minimum or keep some of them in your sideboard.

6) Does this card burn itself out?

This question addresses the life expectancy of each card. Essentially, once you put a permanent in play, how long before you will have to replace it? There are two main reasons you'd need to do this: First, the card might have some effect that removes itself from play—Nevinyrral's Disk, for example. Second, the card might be one that, by nature of its strength, tends to draw fire to itself. For example, Orcish Lumberjack (a red 1/1 creature from *Ice Age*TM that can sacrifice forests for three mana in any combination of red and/or green) tends to be hit with Lightning Bolt or Swords to Plowshares as soon as it hits the table. Cards that fall in this category need to have extras in the deck to increase the chances that one will survive long enough to be of use.

While none of the cards in the white weenie deck are horribly vulnerable, the Crusades provide much of the power of the deck (and also make your creatures harder to kill). This makes them very inviting targets for Disenchants, so count on having multiples of this card.

7) Might this card go better in the sideboard?

When you are deciding how many of a card to include, don't forget that you can straddle the fence by including a few extra of the card in your sideboard. A perfect example is Swords to Plowshares in your white weenie deck. As the effectiveness of Swords depends completely on the number of creatures your opponent is playing, you can adapt by playing two Swords in your deck with two Swords in your sideboard. This way, you can swap the extras in if you run into a heavy creature deck, and you can keep them from taking up space in your hand when playing other deck types.

Doing IT WHITE

Having looked over the six questions, let's take a moment to examine each of the cards in our white weenie deck:

Armageddon—This card forces an interesting choice. Because it is integral to the deck, you need to make sure you have enough copies so that you'll have one in your hand when you need it. But as it is useless early in the game or in multiples, you don't want too many. You want to lean slightly towards the high side because Aramageddon works well in the middle to late game. *Recommendation:* three (but leaning towards two)

Crusade—As this card is essential to any white weenie deck, cheap to cast, cumulative in effect, and a likely target for Disenchants, four copies of it are a must.

*Recommendation: four

Disenchant—Although very versatile and relatively cheap, this card is not a core card of a white weenie deck. Thus, the card needs to be limited. *Recommendation:* two (with two more in the sideboard)

Savannah Lions—Like Crusade, this card is integral, cheap, and useful in large numbers. *Recommendation:* four

Swords to Plowshares—This card is a tricky one to estimate. It is a general-purpose card that is cheap and works well in the early game, but it has the disadvantage of not being integral to the deck. Also, the card is almost useless if your opponent has no creatures. *Recommendation:* two (with two more in the sideboard)

Wrath of God—This is a card that can be helpful mid-game (if your opponent has gotten out a horde of creatures out first), but otherwise it will just sit in your hand. Also, as this card is a waste against a creatureless deck, you should keep it to a minimum.

Recommendation: one

A FINAL NOTE

Just remember that each card in a deck should be accounted for. Don't throw four of a particular card in just out of habit. Actually think about the card and really consider what impact the card's quantity will have on your deck. Believe it or not, the difference between a good deck and a great deck depends on something as little as having only three of a card instead of four.

Before he was a member of the Magic R&D team, Mark Roswater lived in L.A., working as a writer for Roseanne. Mark is probably best known for Magic: The Puzzling and the episode about Roseanne going to see a Wayne Newton impersonator.













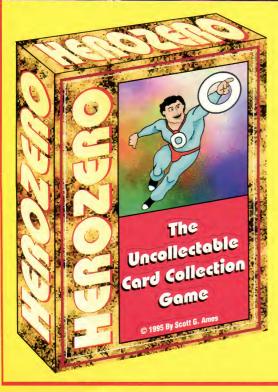
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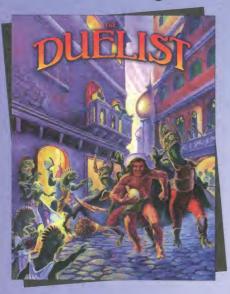
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Read 'Em Like a Continue | Conti

By Zak Dolan

hen playing Magic: The Gathering®, especially at the tournament level, you need to figure out your opponents' strategies as quickly as possible. The faster you do, the more prepared you'll be to capitalize on their weaknesses and avoid major blunders. Essentially, by being able to identify the central strategy of your opponent's deck, you'll be better able to identify the key cards to neutralize. You'll also be more likely to avoid the major traps, tricks, and pitfalls your opponent sets for you, and you'll know how to effectively sideboard for the next duel. This article surveys the most common types of tournament decks and the cards which identify them, and offers strategies for neutralizing the threat each poses.

READING THEMES

When you're trying to identify what kind of deck you face, it helps to know the basic themes that recur in tournaments. To do this, you need to know the *indicator cards* for each strategy type. Indicator cards are cards that tend to show up only in certain deck types, as opposed to *staple cards*, like Disenchant, Counterspell, Terror, Lightning Bolt, and Sylvan Library, which tend to appear in any deck with the appropriate colors in it. With a staple card, usually only one mana of a particular color is required to cast the spell. This makes it flexible enough to go in multicolor decks. There are some staple cards which require two mana of a particular color or that have mana-intensive activation costs; if you see these, you can bet that at least a third of your opponent's deck is that color. Thus, Order of Leitbur usually indicates a deck with a fair amount of white in it, whereas Swords to Plowshares might be the only white card in the deck.

Discard Decks

Discard decks are fairly easy to identify. Hymn to Tourach and Disrupting Scepter are staple cards and tend to show up in a lot of decks, but The Rack, Mindstab Thrull, Abyssal Specter, Mind Warp, Hypnotic Specter, and Mind Ravel are indicator cards and show up primarily in discard decks. To beat discard, it helps to play cards critical to your deck quickly, draw as many cards as possible, and destroy cards that make you discard turn after turn, such as Hypnotic Specter. Most good tournament decks will have a few cards like Jayemdae Tome that let you draw more cards, so

make sure to play them fast and protect them as best you can, as they are your strongest line of defense against discard decks.

Land-Destruction Decks

Land-destruction decks are another common type of tournament deck and are signaled by Stone Rain, Thermokarst, Blight, Orcish Mine, and Icequake. Strip Mines, though they can be used to destroy land, are staple cards in many decks and frequently do not indicate a land-destruction strategy. Generally, an opponent with a land-destruction deck tries to take out one of your colors in order to cut your deck in half. He also tries to hit you with a lot of damage quickly, before you draw more land. Your chances of beating an opponent like this will be better if you save one land until you're going to use it to cast an equalizing spell such as Balance. Also, try to get artifact and creature mana into play as quickly as possible. Using low-cost anti-artifact spells (e.g., Crumble, Shatter) to destroy damaging artifacts like Black Vise and low-cost anti-creature cards (e.g., Swords to Plowshares, Lightning Bolt) to take out creatures such as Mole Worms is a good tactic, too. Make sure to play Zuran Orb immediately (most tournament decks have one of these), so when he targets a land for destruction, you can sacrifice it to gain 2 life.

Weenie Decks

Weenie decks (also called swarm decks) are typically identified by mass pump-up spells, like Crusade, Bad Moon, and Sunken City, or by small creatures that aren't staple cards, such as Savannah Lions. Since this deck aims to overrun you with creatures, you can beat the weenie horde by using equalizer cards like Nevinyrral's Disk, Jokulhaups, Pyroclasm, or Pestilence, once your opponent has several creatures out. That way, you trade one of your cards for several of hers, giving you a card advantage.

You can also use life-gaining, stalling cards like Fountain of Youth, Stasis, or Ivory Tower to give you time to get to your equalizer cards. If you aren't playing equalizer cards, try to destroy creatures as they come out with creature-killing cards. Similarly, if you see more than one creature of the same type (e.g., Goblin, Merfolk, Zombie), then you are probably facing a *creature-feature deck*.

These decks use cards like Goblin King or Lord of Atlantis to make a particular creature type bigger, better, or both. If you target these cards—Lord of Atlantis rather than Merfolk, for example—your opponent loses a key element of her strategy.

Big-Creature Decks

In contrast, some players try to get one big creature out fast in order to win the game quickly. Getting mana from Orcish Lumberjack, Dark Ritual, or Mana Vault is a popular method for getting something big out quickly. When you see an Orgg, a Johtull Wurm, a Derelor, or a Goblin Mutant, you can bet your opponent plans on defeating you with it in short order. These creatures can be especially dangerous with an enhancing enchantment, like Soul Kiss or Feast of the Unicorn: once one is played, you only have two turns (on average) to find a solution.

Later in the game, watch out for Armageddon or Jokulhaups followed immediately by a big creature. If you think your opponent

is playing a *big-creature deck*, don't waste a Swords to Plowshares or Terror, which could kill a big creature, on something small. Do use small creature-killers like Lightning Bolt to take out creatures like Orcish Lumberjacks that provide extra mana. Likewise, if you have cards that steal creatures, save them for a large one.

Counterspell Decks

Counterspell decks are also fairly common in tournaments. These decks generally try to get one key card into play and then protect it with Counterspells and the like. If an opponent has Spell Blast, Memory Lapse, or Force Void, you can generally assume that he's playing a counterspell deck and has duplicates of these cards, as well as Counterspell and Power Sink. Look carefully at his available mana (from lands and from other sources) and see what spells are in his graveyard to find out what he could reasonably have that would

stop your spell. For example, if he has only one blue mana and has already used four Spell Blasts and you have enough mana to get around a Power Sink, you're probably safe casting Tsunami. You should save spells that will force a card past a Counterspell—for instance, Pyroblast or Red Elemental Blast—until you have something really important to cast, and then count his mana to make sure he can't counter the spell twice.

Watch the card count closely, both your hand and your opponent's. If he finds a way to get ahead and stay ahead on card count, you're in real trouble. At the first opportunity, destroy any cards that force you to discard or that let him get more cards. Furthermore, rather than casting an important spell and hoping that your opponent doesn't have a Counterspell, wait until you've

got enough mana to cast two important spells and he only has enough to stop one. Then, cast your first spell. If he counters it, you're home free on the second. If he doesn't stop it, then either you've sneaked one by him or he doesn't have any countermagic, in which case you still might try to cast the other spell.

Mass-Destruction Decks

Mass-destruction decks can be devastating, but if you know what's coming, you can spare yourself some agony. Players using mass-destruction decks usually wait for you to play a slew of cards, destroy them with one of their cards, such as Jokulhaups, Balance, or Wrath of God, and then play damage-dealing cards. A good indication of this kind of deck is the conspicuous absence of permanents. If your opponent seems to have plenty of mana but is holding back for some reason, she might be waiting for you to over-extend yourself so she can destroy everything. For example, if you empty your hand by putting all your cards into play in three turns but your oppo-

nent only plays mana-generating cards, she gains a huge advantage by playing Jokulhaups, since you have no cards left afterwards and she still has several cards in hand. If you discover that you're facing a mass-destruction deck, be sure to hold a few cards in reserve, especially land; that way, you won't be without cards in your hand when the destruction comes. It's also a good idea to hold at least one card in your hand (usually a land) for bluffing purposes.



Orb decks are nasty, too. Named for their use of Winter Orb, these decks control available resources with Howling Mine and Icy Manipulator, both good staple cards. These decks are extremely difficult to distinguish from other types of decks until Winter Orb is sprung on you for the first

time. The best cards to use to defend yourself against this strategy are cards that destroy multiple artifacts at once, for example, Nevinyrral's Disk, Energy Flux, and Dust to Dust. Try to play your cards quickly, and if you use a Jester's Cap (again, most tournament decks contain one), use it to remove your opponent's sources of damage (such as Black Vise) or Winter Orbs.

Card-Drawing Decks

Card-drawing decks are more subtle. Players using card-drawing decks attempt to gain more cards over the course of several turns, usually with the intent of taking control of some element of the game (see *lock decks*, below) or burning through the deck to get to a key card or combination (Necropotence,



for example.) Elkin Bottle, Necropotence, Greed, and Book of Rass are good examples of key, non-staple cards found in this type of deck. To stop decks that rely on spending life to draw cards, damage your opponent as quickly as possible to prevent her from cycling through her whole deck. With cards that need mana to get more cards, take away either the card that lets her get more cards or the mana that activates it, depending on your deck's focus. Generally, it's a bad idea to disenchant a Necropotence after your opponent has already used it to set aside several cards because she gets her draw phase back and will get those cards anyway. Also, be extremely careful when playing lands if your opponent plays a Land Tax. Many times, she needs to be able to take advantage of Land Tax in order for her whole deck concept to work. Don't make it easier for her.

Direct-Damage Decks

Direct-damage decks generally ignore your creatures and hit you hard and fast. Lightning Bolt and Fireball tend to be staple cards, but Incinerate and Pyrotechnics are definite indicator cards in direct-damage decks. When facing this style of deck, you can try to get creatures out as quickly as possible to draw fire and keep your opponent on the defense. Another possibility is to use protective cards to stop the bleeding, such as Circle of Protection: Red or Pentagram of the Ages, or use life-gaining cards like Ivory Tower, Zuran Orb, and Reverse Damage to keep pace with the damage.

Millstone Decks

Millstone decks are characterized by (you can see this coming, can't you?) the Millstone. (Most of the time, that is; Jester's Cap or Jokulhaups can be used to achieve the same effect.) Other possible indicator cards are Ray of Erasure, Elemental Augury, Portent, Tormod's Crypt, Orcish Spy, Vexing Arcanix, and Reef Pirates. Generally, a player using this type of deck tries to run you out of cards as quickly as possible. It's especially dangerous once she has something that lets her peek at the top of your library, since the odds are that she'll keep you from drawing anything but useless cards for quite a while once she gets the right combo. Use rapid damage to defeat her quickly, and carefully guard recursion cards (cards that let you recycle your graveyard) such as Feldon's Cane, holding them in your hand for as long as possible. Cards that entirely remove key elements of an opponent's strategy from the game—Jester's Cap or Swords to Plowshares, for example—are particularly helpful.

Lock Decks

Lock decks are perhaps the hardest to figure out, since usually by the time you discover the locking mechanism, it's a little too late. Lock decks attempt to control or deprive you of some key resource: Zur's Weirding, Stasis, Manabarbs, Disrupting Scepter, Time Elemental, Orcish Squatters, and Elemental Augury are a few examples of the different kinds and strengths of locks avail-

able. A key indicator of a lock deck is its reactive nature, responding to your actions rather than trying to be aggressive. If you see a really unusual card, odds are that your opponent is trying to set up a lock of some kind. Try to identify a theme to the cards he has played as well as which other cards would logically go well with the card he's played, and you'll probably be able to figure out the strategy of his whole deck. Generally, your best defense is to take out the key to his lock (no pun intended). Plus, if you can identify the resource he is trying to control, you can manage it with care, thus avoiding the lock.

AN OPEN BOOK

If you're not content just spotting indicator cards as your opponent plays them, a few cards allow you to take this strategy further by giving you a peek at your opponent's hand. Clairvoyance and Glasses of Urza are two of the best examples, but if you put cards like these into your deck, use them for more than just "seeing"; apply your new knowledge by adjusting strategies accordingly. Also, Jester's Cap lets you see all the cards your opponent is using so you can analyze how her deck is supposed to work and decide exactly what to sideboard for the next match.

Identifying your opponent's strategy early can be a major advantage, but don't make the mistake of providing your opponent with the same advantage. By being conservative in what you reveal, you can make it more difficult for your opponent to know what to expect. For example, by playing only land of one color and keeping land of your second color in your hand until you're going to use it, you can trick your opponent into believing that you're playing fewer colors than you actually are. An example of this is to play only islands for the first few turns. Your opponent will naturally not want her best spells countered, so she'll hold them back as long as possible. Then, right after you Counterspell one of her spells, play your Mountain and hit her with a Fireball.

Above all, though, you have to adapt to a strategy as soon as you identify it, and this is much easier if you've made a flexible deck, one that can adapt to its targets as the need arises. Disenchant is a classic example of flexibility, as it can destroy both enchantments and artifacts. Once you've determined your opponent's goal, it's much easier to choose between using Disenchant on an artifact such as Black Vise or an enchantment such as Land Tax.

Think about these ideas the next time you watch a tournament match and see how many cards you can predict before they are played. It's fun to see your opponent's expression when you've guessed what she's playing just from the mana she's tapped. And the better you get at predicting your opponent, the more chances you'll have to win.

Since winning the first Magic World Championship, Zak Dolan has been a regular contributor to The Duelist. He is currently pursuing a graduate degree in engineering at Stanford University and still finds time to write about (and play) Magic.

"Who cares
for you?" said Alice
(she had grown to her full size
by this time). "You're nothing
but a pack of cards!"
—Lewis Carroll,
Alice in Wonderland

laying Magic: The Gathering® simulates a duel between two wizards slinging spells, summoning creatures, and erecting defensive barriers. Lurking in the background of this fantasy setting, however, is a card game. Some spells allow the player, like Alice, to step back from the fantasy world and deal directly with the cards as cards. Most of them try to masquerade as part of the fantasy setting, with names like Brainstorm and Forgotten Lore that suggest wizardly metaphors. Neither of these cards, however, has abilities that are particularly steeped in fantasy. Brainstorm moves cards back and forth between deck and hand, and Forgotten Lore retrieves a card from the graveyard. They don't deal with wizards, spells, or magical creatures-rather, they declare, "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" These "Alice effects" treat cards as cards and are useful in any deck, no matter what its theme.

So what exactly do Alice effects do? In normal Magic play, cards begin the game in a player's library, move from there to the player's hand, and then move into the graveyard (possibly with a detour through the "in play" area). Alice effects disrupt this flow, moving cards arbitrarily from one area to another. Many let you bring cards from your library or graveyard into your hand or strip cards from an opponent's hand, library, or graveyard; a few put cards directly into play. In the following article, we'll take a look at these different types of Alice effects and the strategies they make possible.

LIBRARY TO HAND

he prime limiting factors in Magic are mana and cards.
When the game begins, players have a full hand of cards but generally can't do anything until they get enough mana. Late in a long-lasting game, players typically have enough mana sources to cast any spell in their decks but can't do much because their hands are empty or near-empty. Between these two extremes lies the "mid-game," where both cards and mana are in short supply. Regardless of deck design, at some point cards-in-hand becomes the limiting factor. Anything that puts more

cards in your hand or removes cards from your opponent's hand can have a huge influence on the game. Bring on the Alice effects!

Cantrips, the cards introduced in Ice Age that let you draw another card next upkeep, illustrate the principle that oneshot effects are generally cheaper than reusable or continuous effects. Measured just in mana cost, cantrips are more expensive for the effect they generate than other spells with similar effects. Mind Ravel costs the same amount of mana to cast as Disrupting Scepter, for example, but can only be used once. But because cantrips replenish your hand, you can almost think of them as "free" in the later stages of a game—the entire casting cost of the spell is generally less than the cost of using any of the "draw a card" effects, such as Jayemdae Tome.

Another family of Alice effects gives you various ways to take cards directly from your library instead of drawing them in the regular course of play. The distinction between "taking" a card through this kind of effect and "drawing" a card would be needless nit-picking, except for the presence of yet another type of Alice effect card: those that

by Beth Moursund

ALICE CFFCL

activate when a player draws a card (such as Underworld Dreams) or that interfere with a player's draw (such as Necropotence or Zur's Weirding). These cards only look at "draws," not at the various non-draw ways to get cards from your library. Combining Necropotence or Zur's Weirding with some non-draw geta-card effects, such as Elkin Bottle, can lead to a very effective deck.

upkeep phases (as long as your opponent controls more land than you do). This is obviously helpful in the early, manashort part of the game, and against land-destruction strategies. Less obviously, it's also useful in the late game, when you've got all the land you need. Using Land Tax, you can strip all the basic land from your library, guaranteeing that none of your draws will be "wasted" on a basic land.

The cheapest per-card drawing effect is Howling Mine. For a one-time cost of two mana, all players get one extra draw per turn. Clearly, this can be a two-edged sword; your opponents are drawing just as many extra cards as you are, and this may be just the advantage they need to win. But if you have the type of deck that reaches cardshortage by turn three, then they may be stuck discarding useful cards while you're casting merrily away. Another Howling Mine strategy is to combine it with another card that can tap it, such as Icy Manipulator or Relic Barrier. Now you can turn it off each turn before your opponent draws, keeping the benefits only for yourself. Finally, vet another Alice effect card, Black Vise, works well with Howling Mine. With a Vise clamping down and the Mine howling away, your opponents not only have to scurry to try to come up with enough mana to avoid

Some of the non-draw Alice effects allow you to search through your library for a particular type of card and reshuffle afterward. Most of these restrict what you can retrieve: Nature's Lore, for example, lets you retrieve a forest and put it directly into play, while Merchant Scroll can only get you blue instants and interrupts. One of the most powerful of these cards is Land Tax, which lets you grab up to

three basic lands during each of your

LIBRARY TO GRAVEYARD

can't play the cards

quickly enough.

throwing away valuable cards,

but they also take damage if they

ibrary-to-graveyard Alice effects are more specialized but still somewhat versatile. You can use them on an opponent's library, either to run your opponent out of cards or to control which cards make it to your opponent's hand. You can also use them on your own library, to get cards into

your graveyard for the various graveyardbased effects (more on those later), or to try to ensure that you draw the most useful cards.

The archetypal library-to-graveyard card is Millstone. Decks that win by running the opponent out of cards are generically referred to as Millstone decks, even if they don't actually include any Millstones. Henry Stern's "Vise Age" deck, which placed second in the National Championship, sometimes operates as a Millstone deck just by using Jokulhaups. A successful Millstone deck needs a way to empty an opponent's library quickly and enough defenses to survive during the process. If this is the deck's primary strategy, then it's usually a good idea to have some way to clean out your opponent's graveyard, too-or a single Feldon's Cane can ruin your day. A way to recycle your own graveyard may also be helpful, in case your opponent's deck is larger than yours. On the other hand, if you have a way to return cards to your library or have something that prevents you from drawing, such as Island Sanctuary or Necropotence, then you can protect yourself from a Millstone defeat.

Controlling an opponent's draws is a little more difficult, but it can be very rewarding (and quite annoying to your opponent) if you manage to pull it off. A number of Alice cards allow this as a oneshot effect. Portent, for example, lets you look at the top three cards of a library and then either arrange them in any order you choose or, if you'd rather not see any of them drawn, shuffle the whole library. Used with a Millstone or Ray of Erasure, this gives you the ability to put the cards that you don't want to be in your opponent's hand on top of the library and then drop them into the graveyard. Orcish Spy plus a Millstone offers almost the same effect—and it's reusable. You look at the top card in the library, leave it alone if it's one you don't mind your opponent drawing, or grind it away if it's good. You can use these same combinations on your own library, too, to try to make your own draws more useful.

HAND TO GRAVEYARD

nything that can force your opponent to discard is obviously powerful. Your opponent can't cast a spell if she doesn't have it in her hand. If you can keep an opponent's hand stripped bare of cards, you can finish her off at your leisure with just a small creature or two. The decks based on this principle, referred to as discard decks, are some of the most potent adversaries in Magic.

Some discard decks don't even bother with creatures, relying solely on other Alice effect cards like The Rack for damage. The Rack is, in some ways, more powerful than Black Vise. It can't do as much damage, since it's impossible to have fewer than zero cards in your hand but very possible to have more than seven. However, increasing the number of cards in your hand is usually more difficult than removing cards from it, so The Rack is harder to evade. Also, an opponent suffering from The Rack will often hesitate to cast spells, since doing so leads to more Rack damage. If you convince your opponent to keep three cards in hand, you've given yourself a two-turn advantage. Further, reusable discard effects like Disrupting Scepter are great against "permission" decks (decks that control the game by preventing an opponent from casting anything successfully or stealing what does come into play) because counterspells are only usable when the opponent tries to cast something. If you use the Scepter first, you can force a discard before the spell can be countered, or the card stolen.

If having to discard cards is so crippling to an opponent, it may seem foolish to use an effect that requires discarding your own cards, unless it is so powerful that it would nearly win you the game. Actually, some Alice effects are that powerful. Many players have finished off opponents with Stormbind, a red/green enchantment that, for two mana and one random card from your hand, deals 2 damage to target creature or player. There are other, more subtle reasons to use some of these effects, though. Many Alice effects grow in power as your graveyard grows. You may want to deliberately dump creatures into your graveyard when using cards with these

effects. Songs of the Damned gives you one black mana for each creature in your graveyard, and Lhurgoyf gets +1/+1 for each creature in any graveyard. With other cards, the benefit is indirect; Animate Dead and Dance of the Dead allow you to bring a creature into play from any graveyard. If you have a lot of creatures in your graveyard, then you have many choices for targets, making these spells more versatile and powerful.

The ability to discard cards can also help you overcome the disadvantages inherent in each stage of the game. In the early game, high-cost spells are useless to you, since you most likely can't cast them. In the late game, land is almost as useless, since you probably have more than enough mana. If these useless cards can be discarded to power some useful effect, then you've gotten a benefit for almost no cost. The effects that require a discard but allow you to choose which cards to discard are thus not as costly as they might seem.

GRAVEYARD TO WHEREVER

nother category of Alice effects includes cards that pull cards out of the graveyard, putting them directly into play (Animate Dead), into your hand (Forgotten Lore), back into your library (Feldon's Cane), or removing them from the game entirely (Tormod's Crypt). We've already touched on most of these while discussing the other categories, but one strategy, the strategy which drives "Reanimator" decks, deserves special mention.

A Reanimator deck is designed to drop large creatures into the graveyard and then bring them into play from there, thus avoiding the cost of casting them. Anything that allows you to draw or discard extra cards works well for this strategy. Cards that do both at the same time, such as Bazaar of Baghdad, Jalum Tome, and Krovikan Sorcerer, are especially useful. Skull of Orm is an excellent addition, allowing you to recycle the Enchant Dead Creature cards. Enduring Renewal is also worth considering, since it gives you a way to recycle any creatures you get into play, dead or not.

Speaking of Enduring Renewal, all of the various infinite-loop tricks involving zerocost creatures with a Fallen Angel, Ashnod's Altar, or other sacrifice-powered effect, really are legal. You can sacrifice a creature for an effect and have it returned to play by Enduring Renewal only to be sacrificed again... and again... and again.... It sure seems like you should be able to build a championship-level deck using this, but so far, no one has come up with one. Those who have tried have found it too difficult to get the combinations into play, or to protect them once they're out. But there's a first time for everything....

END PHASE

Stepping away from the fantasy setting of Magic and dealing with the cards as cards is a key element in constructing strategic decks. Some Alice effects are useful in almost any deck; others are so specialized that you'd need to design your entire deck around them. Used wisely, though, Alice effects can have your opponent floundering in a pool of tears while you're grinning like the Cheshire Cat. So have fun playing—and watch out for snacks labeled "Eat Me."

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The Magic: The Gathering Pocket
Players' Guide®. She also serves as the
Wizards of the Coast netrep on
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ZUR'S WEIRDING AND ELKIN BOTTLE

Before you play this

Tower or a few copies of Fountain of Youth. Once you're comfortable gaining Weirding (a blue enchantment from Ice AgeTM). With Zur's Weirding, whenever a player draws a card, another player can force her to discard it by paying 2 life. Thus, you can force your opponent to discard every card she draws, and the penalty of paying 2 life will hardly matter to you since you'll be gaining 2 life per turn. Of course, your opponent can force you to discard too, but you can get around that risk by playing with Elkin Bottle (an artifact from Ice Age), which allows you to tap 3 and the Elkin Bottle to take a card. Because you're taking a card and not drawing a card, your opponent will not be able to use

the effect of Zur's Weirding to force you to discard it.

STONE SPIRIT

Stone Spirit (from Ice Age) can't be blocked by flying creatures, so

if you give the Spirit flying ability (using a card such as Flight or Wings of Aesthir), it not only can't be blocked by ground creatures (except those who can block fliers), it also can't be blocked by other flying creatures.

ARMAGEDDON CLOCK, ANIMATE ARTIFACT, AND SPIRIT LINK

This combination can be both fun and powerful. Armageddon Clock collects a doom counter during each of your upkeeps and at the end of your upkeep it deals damage to each player equal to

> the number of doom counters on it. Cast Animate Artifact on

> > the Clock, turning it into an artifact creature and making it a legal target for Spirit Link.

Spirit Link lets you gain 1 life for every 1 damage your Armageddon Clock creature deals, so in a twoplayer game, you

gain back all the life that Armaggedon Clock takes away from you. In a multiplayer game, however, you come out even better, since the Clock deals damage to more than one player. You can also substitute Aladdin's Ring, Voodoo Doll, or Copper Tablet for the Armageddon Clock.





Stephen D'Angelo,

Jared Earle,

Mike Moore,

Barry Reich,

Charles Keith-Stanley,

Howard Kahlenberg,

David Katleman,

Mark Rosewater,

Michael G. Ryan,

Marc Schmalz,

Jon Wilkie, and

Tom Wylie



TITANIA'S SONG AND ENDURING RENEWAL

Here's a way to get the benefit of recycling creatures with Enduring Renewal (a white enchantment from *Ice Age*) without the penalty of not being able to put new creatures into play. First, play Titania's Song (a green enchantment that turns all non-creature artifacts into creatures). This in itself will probably annoy your opponent if he plays with artifacts, since Titania's Song causes the non-creature artifacts to lose their regular abilities. Then you can annoy him

even further when you put Enduring Renewal into play. Enduring



Renewal stipulates that if you draw a creature card, you must discard it, but whenever a creature

in play goes to your graveyard, you put that creature back into your hand. So build a creatureless deck loaded with artifacts. You'll be able to put new creatures into play, despite Enduring Renewal, because Titania's Song will turn all your artifacts into creatures. Further, if something is a creature when it goes to the graveyard, Enduring Renewal will immediately put it back into your hand, so if your artifacts-turned-creatures die, you can put them back into your hand and thus never have a creature shortage.

TIME BOMB AND REVERSE DAMAGE

When it's sacrificed, Time Bomb (an artifact from *Ice Age*) does damage to each creature and player equal



to the number of counters on it, but you won't have to worry about getting hurt as long as you have a Reverse Damage in your hand to convert that damage into life. The longer you can keep Time Bomb in play, the more counters it will collect, and if you can hold your Reverse Damage long enough, Time Bomb will have enough counters on it to finish off your opponent for good. You can then watch her face fall as she sees your life total soar while hers dwindles into nothingness. (Note that Time Bomb doesn't work with the Animate Artifact/Spirit Link combination mentioned above; Time Bomb is sacrificed as a side effect to its effect being triggered, destroying Spirit Link.)

AN-HAVVA INN

An-Havva Inn (a green sorcery from *Homelands*) gives you 1 life plus 1 life for each green creature in play for only 1 •• ••. This works beautifully with Aisling Leprechaun (a green creature from *Legends*TM), which turns creatures

green that block or are blocked by it. But your opponent will turn all shades of green when you use Sylvan Paradise (an enchantment from Legends) to change all of his creatures to



green. In a multiplayer game, this combo could net you vast amounts of life, as would playing multiple An-Havva Inns. An-Havva Inn also works well in Thallid decks, since all of those Saprolings are green as well.

AYSEN HIGHWAY AND JINX

White weenie decks usually have to win quickly, before your opponent can assemble a defense. Wouldn't it be great if your little white attackers could sneak around your opponent's defenses? Enter the Aysen Highway (a white enchantment from *Homelands*), which gives all white creatures plainswalk. What, your opponent doesn't have any plains? Well, you could

use Magical Hack and give white creatures whatever landwalking ability you choose, or you could use Phantasmal Terrain to make sure that your opponent has plains to walk





through in the first place. You could also cast the Jinx (an instant from *Homelands*) to make one of your opponent's lands a plains until the end of the turn. As an

added bonus, Jinx is able to neutralize defensive lands like Maze of Ith. And since Jinx is a cantrip, it "replaces" itself during the next upkeep. Jinx is also handy with creatures that have intrinsic landwalking ability because it can't be Disenchanted after the landwalkers are committed to the attack, unlike Phantasmal Terrain.

GREATER WEREWOLF AND SORCERESS QUEEN

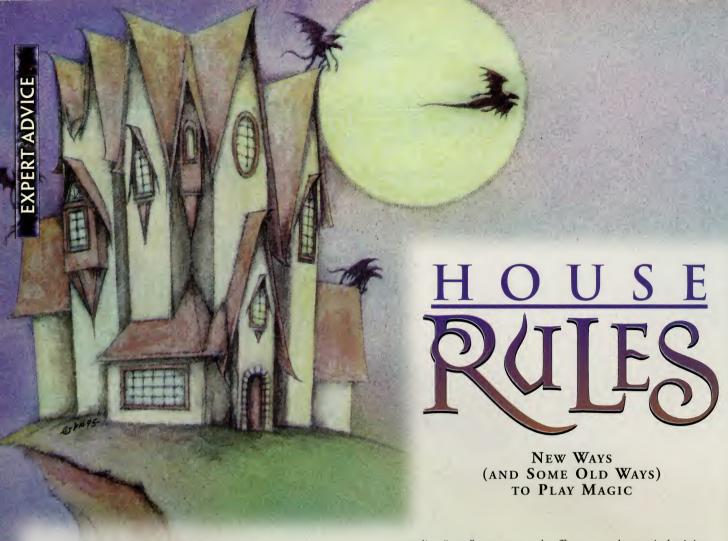
Sorceress Queen is an amazing card because it has so many uses that work wonderfully with numerous strategies. Now, using Greater Werewolf (a black creature from *Homelands*), you can create a new strategy. Tapping your Sorceress Queen will make a target creature 0/2 until the end of the turn; the Greater Werewolf puts a -0/-2

tures blocking or blocked by it. So when Greater Werewolf is involved in combat, wait until attack and defense are chosen and

counter on all crea-



then turn the creature that Greater Werewolf is battling into a 0/2 creature. At the end of the combat, if the Werewolf's power doesn't finish a creature off, its special ability will. If you can manage to get *two* creatures to block your Greater Werewolf, you might be able to get rid of both blocking creatures.



PLAYING GOD

by Anthony Loquercio
(with thanks to Brad Ostrand and his uncle)

Playing God is somewhat different from more traditional four-player Magic: The Gathering® variants, yet it contains an aspect of team play, as you will soon see. The variant uses standard multiplayer rules, but there are different rules for deck construction, and the "ethics" of play differ as well.

THE GODS AND THEIR MINIONS

Four players is the optimal number of people for this type of game, although more may participate as long as there is an even number of players. In this variation, you play a god while your teammate plays your minion (or vice versa), and your opponents' teams are arranged in the same way. As the minions play a traditional two-player duel, the gods attempt to help their minions as best they can while simultaneously trying to crush the rival god. Minions cannot affect the god players in any way; however, the gods can affect any player.

THE COMMANDMENTS FROM THE GODS

The rules for minions, as stated above, are those used in a traditional one-on-one duel. There are, however, some distinctions in how minions' actions affect the game environment:

- 1. Minions can only affect minions.
- 2. Enchantments, sorceries, creatures, instants, interrupts, and artifacts that have global effects or specify particular things

regarding "your" opponent only affect you and your rival minion. For example, if a minion player has Pestilence in play, it will not affect either of the god players but will affect the minions.

CODE OF THE DEITY

The rules the gods must abide by are almost opposite those of their minions.

- 1. A god player may affect any player in the game with almost any type of spell or non-creature ability (except as noted below). A god player's creatures may only attack, defend against, and use fast effects on the opposing god player. In summary, no god's creature can affect any minion player.
- 2. Global effects and spells cast by god players affect all players. Using the example above, had a god player cast Pestilence, it would apply to all the players, minions and gods alike.
- 3. A god player may not directly damage any minion player; he or she may, however, do direct damage to a minion's creatures as well as to the rival god player. As stated above, damage taken from global effects, such as effects of enchantments (e.g., Pestilence) and artifacts (e.g., The Rack), does not fall into the direct-damage category. A Rod of Ruin, however, is considered a direct-damage source and therefore may not be used to damage a minion. There will undoubtedly be instances during game play that will be somewhat foggy, so before proceeding with the effects of a particular card, decide among the game participants how cards will be played.

LIVING AND DYING

During the turn sequence, the minions go first, and then play proceeds to the gods; the god who goes first is the god whose minion went first. The winner is the team that defeats the rival *minion* player first. Of course, wouldn't it be nice to finish off the rival god player so that the other minion player is without the support of his or her deity and without the ability to destroy the rival god? Two against one—ouch!

FIXED-DECK TOURNAMENT

by Scott Nicholson santa@uoknor.edu

In *Duelist* #7, Lars Backstrom suggested a tournament style based on duplicate bridge; in that same vein, there is a tournament type that I invented and have run many times locally—it's called the Fixed-Deck Tournament. First, create pairs of identical decks, making enough decks to accommodate the number of players in the first round. The players are allowed five minutes to review their decks, placing cards in any order they desire. Decks are not shuffled before play begins. After the game, ask players to make sure that the decks contain identical cards again, preparing them for the next players to order in the way they choose. This works best as a single-elimination, one-game-per-round tournament and removes all luck from the game, as both players have the same cards and can arrange their cards in the order they think will be most effective.

MEMORY MAGIC

by Zak Dolan

A friend of mine, Brian, wanted to develop a game variant that he could play in the car or when he didn't have his cards with him. This variation can be played entirely in your head, without actually having the cards, provided you've got a good memory. He said he developed the game based on my play style—lots of challenge, no duplicate cards, and infinite amounts of luck.

In order to make the game challenging, you start out with no cards in your hand. In addition, all restricted cards are banned—without this restriction, the game would be too easy. Also, The Rack is banned, since it would be a spoiler for this method of play. If you are playing somewhere where it's difficult to flip a coin (like in a car), you can agree ahead of time to also ban cards requiring a coin flip.

There are no duplicate cards allowed in this variant. In other words, once you've drawn and cast a Lightning Bolt, you won't draw another. This makes the game a little more interesting and a little more challenging because it really makes you think before you cast a spell—should you disenchant that nasty enchantment now, or will you need Disenchant later? (If you want to play a slightly easier version, you can rule that duplicates of basic lands are allowed.)

Finally, since you are *infinitely* lucky, you will always have the card you want on top of your library. This means that you can draw and play whatever card you choose. This, of course, makes it more interesting when you win or lose, since you won't be able to say that you lost because you didn't get a good draw. Determine randomly who goes first. Then each person draws and plays as normal. You don't have to play a card when you draw it, although if you draw and keep a card, you should be playing with people that you trust not to change their minds about what card they have. One alternative is to write down what cards you draw on a piece of paper as you draw them. That way, if you keep a Counterspell, you can't change it later to Mana Drain when you realize how helpful the mana would be.

SEVEH-CARD DRAW

by Thuong Pham

Here's a variant that my friends and I have come up with to help speed up our games: Each player may put down as many land cards as he or she wants without penalty. A player draws seven cards instead of one during his or her draw phase. The seven-card—hand—maximum rule is still in effect, so players usually have to discard cards at the end of the turn. Finally, no cards with X in the casting cost may be played since so much land will be in play. This variant is ideal if you only have a few minutes to play or if you don't like long, drawn-out games.

Теппіз Style

by Dan Hass DinOKC@aol.com

In the past three months, I have participated in six tournaments where there were over seventy decks entered. In bracketed tournaments, the individual who wins the die roll to go first in the first game enjoys a tremendous advantage.

To neutralize this inequity, we have begun using a new format for bracketed play; we refer to it as "tennis style" play because in order to win you must win by two games and "break your opponent's serve." Players play two games with each player going first in one game, regardless of who wins. If they split the first two games they are at "deuce" and play two more games. If neither player has a two-game advantage after four games, they continue with two more games; however, after the fourth game, the receiving player (the player not currently playing first) has the option of changing the environment. Specifically, the receiving player may opt to raise the starting life total to 25 each or to lower it to 15 each. Play continues with "deuce-ad" until one player gets a two-game advantage.

Tournaments are slower than straight two-out-of-three or three-out-of-five play, but we feel that this style of play is much better at determining which deck and player are truly better and not which player was just luckier by winning the opening die roll.

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MAGIC QULINGS

compiled by Tom Wylie

GENERAL RULINGS

The following rulings are meant to clarify the rulebook and how the game works:

1) Q: If I play a summon spell while Æther Storm is in play, can I destroy the Storm with Red Elemental Blast before it counters the spell?

A: No. Effects that counter spells when cast, such as Æther Storm, are triggered once a spell has been played, but before interrupts can be played. By the time Red Elemental Blast can be played, the summon spell has been countered. This is also true of effects which allow the caster of a spell to pay some cost to avoid the effect, such as Nether Void, or effects which allow a player to counter the effect, such as Arcum's Whistle.

2) Q: Exactly when is the target of Forgotten Lore selected?

A: Targets for spells and abilities are selected when the spell or ability is played, even if there is an unusual rule about how the target is selected, such as with Forgotten Lore or Preacher.

3) Q: I know I can't redirect a Red Elemental Blast with Deflection to counter a spell if the Blast was originally played to destroy a permanent, or use the Blast to counter a permanent if it originally targeted a spell. Does that mean that I can't redirect Fissure to bury a land if it originally targeted a creature?

A: No, it doesn't mean that. Fissure does one thing, which is to bury a card, either a creature or a land. Deflection can redirect it from one type of target to another. Red Elemental Blast, on the other hand, does one of two distinct things: it either counters a blue spell or destroys a blue permanent. Deflection can't force the spell to change

from one of these modes to the other, so it can't change the target of the Blast from a spell to a permanent, or vice versa.

4) Q: Evaporate says that it deals 1 damage to each blue creature and white creature. Does it deal 2 damage to creatures that count as both blue and white? A: No. If an effect says it affects "each X and Y," it applies only once to each. Thus Evaporate deals 1 damage to each permanent that counts as a blue, a white, or a blue and white creature.

5) Q: Can Chain Stasis target the same creature more than once? If so, why can it do this while Fireball can't?

A: Yes, Chain Stasis can target the same creature more than once. A spell or ability cannot target the same thing more than once at the same time; if you aren't choosing targets simultaneously, you can target the same thing multiple times with the same spell. With Chain Stasis, one target is chosen, then that target is affected, then another target can be chosen, and so on. Targets for Fireball, on the other hand, are chosen simultaneously, so Fireball cannot target the same thing more than once.

6) Q: If I use Merieke Ri Berit to steal a creature, and someone responds to that by untapping Merieke or removing her from play, is the target buried?

A: Yes, the target will be buried when the effect resolves. If an effect ends or has some other special effect triggered by the effect's source leaving play (or becoming untapped, in the case of Merieke), always check the source when the effect resolves. If the source has already left play (or become untapped), when the effect resolves, then any event triggered by the source leaving play occurs (e.g., a creature controlled by Merieke is buried).

REVERSALS

The following rulings reverse past rulings from the rules team or Wizards of the Coast on-line network representatives ("netreps"):

7) Q: If an Assembly Worker is changed into another land type by an effect like Blood Moon, does it stop being a creature?

A: No. The fast effect that made it into a creature (as well as a land) continues its effect, even though the land type has been changed. The same principle extends to any land animated by a temporary effect, for example, forests animated by Thelonite Druid.

8) Q: Can Ring of Ma'rûf retrieve a card from inside Oubliette or Tawnos's Coffin?

A: No. Cards affected by Oubliette and Tawnos's Coffin are being maintained out of play by cards in play, and in that sense are not out of the game.

CARD ERRATA

The following rulings involve card errata or clarifications to the way a card is interpreted:

9) Q: If I steal a creature with Ray of Command and it's stolen from me later that turn with Seasinger, does it become tapped?

A: No. Ray of Command only taps the stolen creature if you lose control of it at the end of the turn. If you keep control of it through some other effect or if you lose control of it before the end of Ray of Command's effect (at the end of the turn), the creature does not become tapped.

10) Q: The wording on Murk Dwellers and Cave People is unclear: do their

bonuses last only while they're attacking, or do they last until end of turn?

A: If Cave People attacks, it gets +1/-2 until end of turn. Murk Dwellers gets +2/+0 when attacking and not blocked; this bonus ends when combat ends.

11) Q: Fork's wording is confusing; how exactly should it be read? Can I change the color of Fork while it's being cast? A: Fork should be read as follows: "Fork becomes a copy of target spell, acquiring all characteristics, except color, of that spell. Once the spell is copied, choose its new target or targets. The copied spell has the same number of targets as the original." If you change the color of Fork while it's being cast, the copied spell will be whatever color Fork has been changed to.

12) Q: If I play Power Artifact on a Mana Vault, will reducing the activation cost of untapping it to ② allow for an infinite loop of tapping it for four mana, untapping it for two, tapping it for another four, and so on?

A: No. While the cost to untap Mana Vault is paid during upkeep, it does not actually untap until the end of upkeep (in which case it does not deal damage to you). This means that you can't tap the Vault again for additional mana during that upkeep. Similarly, the cost to untap Basalt Monolith can be paid whenever instants are allowed, but it will not untap until the end of the phase.



13) Q: Does Land's Edge deal damage if I discard lands due to other effects (e.g., Mind Twist), or only if I discard them using the effect of Land's Edge?

A: Land's Edge only deals damage if you discard lands using its effect. The effects of Mind Twist, Bazaar of Baghdad, and so forth will not trigger Land's Edge.

14) Q: If an effect such as Naked Singularity changed the type of mana produced by an island, would this change the effect of Snowfall when it is tapped for mana?

A: No. Snowfall causes the island to produce an additional blue mana (only usable for cumulative upkeep) regardless of what type of mana the island is currently producing.

15) Q: I have a Fireball "stored" in an Ice Cauldron. Ice Cauldron states that the mana stored in it can only be used to cast the Fireball. Can I use the mana to pay for additional targets for Fireball, even though that cost isn't part of the casting cost?

A: Yes. This "specialized" mana (just like mana from Metamorphosis or Mishra's Workshop) can be used to pay for costs that are described in the text of the spell the mana is designated for. This mana can't be used, however, to pay for penalties such as Gloom or Power Sink.

16) Q: If I play Power Artifact on a Roterothopter, reducing its activation cost to **①**, can I still spend **②** on its ability during a turn, giving it +4/+0? A: Yes.

17) Q: My opponent only has one creature in play, Autumn Willow. If he uses its ability, allowing him to target Autumn Willow for the turn, can my Preacher now take control of it?

A: Yes. Autumn Willow's ability allows a target player (your opponent, in this case) to target Autumn Willow with spells and effects. The text on Preacher clearly states that your opponent chooses the target for its effect; the fact that you're the effect's controller isn't relevant.

18) Q: Suppose Mana Flare is in play, and I tap a land for mana. My opponent then interrupts that to use Blue

Elemental Blast and destroys the Mana Flare. How much mana do I get?

A: Even though the extra mana from Mana Flare isn't produced until the normal mana for the land is produced, Mana Flare's effect is triggered as soon as the land is tapped for mana. Interrupting your tapping of the land to destroy Mana Flare won't prevent you from getting the extra mana, so you get two mana from the land you tap.

19) Q: Suppose my opponent plays
Terror on a creature of mine, and I target that with Counterspell. My opponent tries to redirect the Counterspell using Deflection. My only remaining card is Deflection. If I use Deflection to redirect my opponent's Deflection to Terror, the Terror will then be targeting Counterspell (because the new target his Deflection gave my Counterspell was already "locked in" as the Counterspell itself). Since Terror can't legally target Counterspell, can I do this?

A: Yes. The sole specification for a legal target of Deflection is "spell which has a single target." Thus, one Deflection can cause another Deflection to target any other spell, even if the first Deflection could not have been played on that spell normally. This simply causes the first Deflection to fail; assuming nothing else happens, the Counterspell and the Terror will still be targeting their original targets.

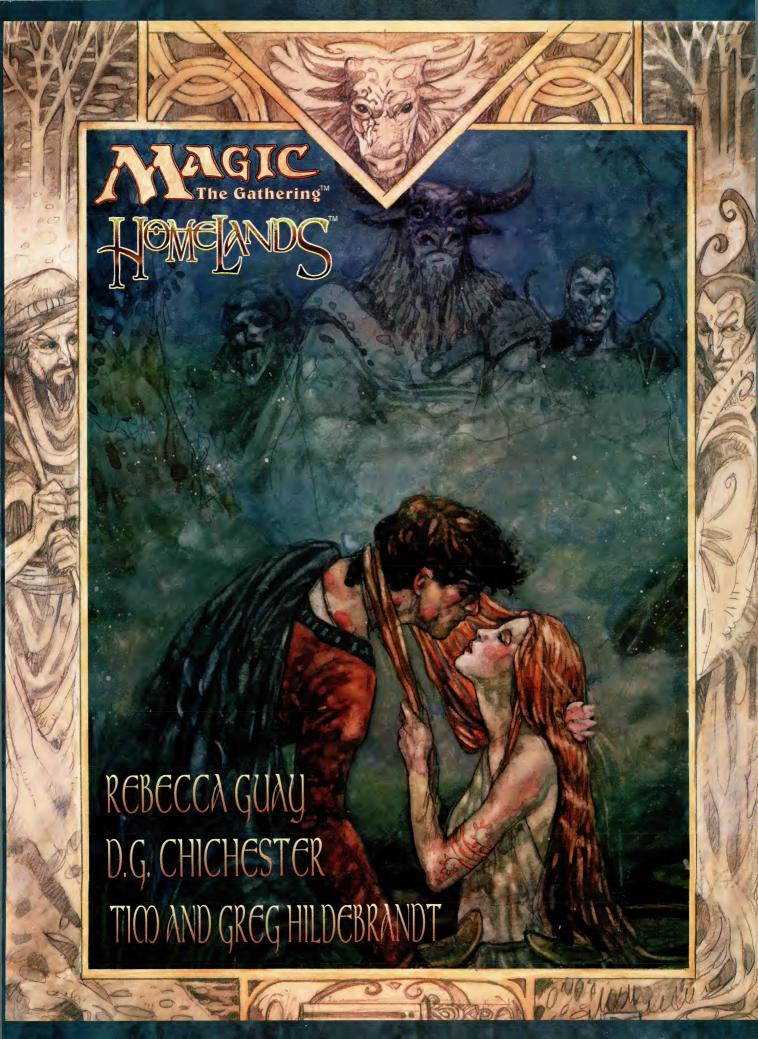
20) Q: If I reanimate my Soldevi Golem with Dance of the Dead, can I untap it for just $\bullet \Theta$, or do I also have to untap an opponent's creature?

A: For payment of untap costs to allow you to untap a creature, all of that creature's untap costs must be paid. Soldevi Golem's ability is an untap cost, so payment of it would be cumulative with Dance of the Dead, Paralyze, or any other costs imposed on the Golem.

21) Q: I play Terror on my opponent's Tim (Prodigal Sorcerer). He responds by using Tawnos's Coffin on Tim. I respond by using Shatter to destroy the Coffin. Is Tim buried?

A: Yes. When the Coffin's effect resolves, Tim will leave play. Then the Coffin will leave pay due to Shatter, so Tim will immediately return. This is still the same Tim (he just took a forced vacation), so he's still the target of Terror.







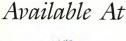






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THE MAGIC RULES YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

by Tom Wylie

ILLUMINATING THE DEPTHS

A s anyone who follows the game of Magic™ knows, the rules are incredibly intricate at times. Entire articles can be (and are) written about the most minute aspects of the rules, from the exact progression of the attack sequence to the ins and outs of damage prevention.

Various articles in *The Duelist* and *The Pocket Players' Guide* have gone into the details of the timing sequence, even to the point of trying to explain *everything* about it. All of these articles, though, have shared one common drawback: no pictures.

This installment of "Murk Dwellers" attempts to address this problem by showing the various cycles of Magic timing in a series of charts. The charts are a good tool for learning timing, but they're also meant to serve as a reference for players who already understand the timing rules (or for those who think they do). While the charts aren't really intended to be an everyday reference, if players in a duel can't agree on how a certain set of events should happen, they should be able to resolve them by following these charts. For example, if you are confused about what and when something can be done during the attack, you can simply start at the top of the Attack chart and work your way until the end. (You can also put the charts on your bedroom wall and stare at them before going to sleep, if you don't mind the dreams....)

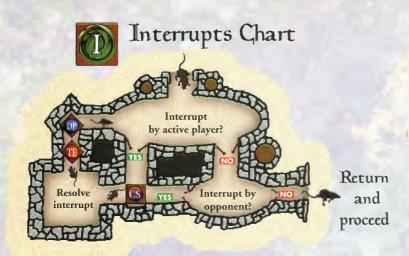
Attached is a fold-out poster, with two charts on one side (Standard Effects and Casting of Spell or Effect), and five smaller charts on the other (Interrupts, Damage Prevention, Attack, Triggered Effects, and Specialized Effects). The Standard Effects chart details the general flow of a phase and acts as a sort of "master" chart; while following the Standard Effects chart, you will typically need to pause and refer to one of the other charts to resolve some specialized timing sequence, such as dealing with damage prevention or triggered effects.

Though you may want to glance over the charts before moving on, it's best to read all of this before making a serious attempt at using the charts. Otherwise, it's quite easy to take a wrong turn and be unsure of what's going on. And though they are intended to be used as a learning tool, don't expect to learn timing just from these charts; find a book or article that explains it, and use both. (I hear there's a good article in the latest *Pocket Players' Guide.*)

DANGER! DANGER! DANGER!

A s per standard operating procedure for "Murk Dwellers," this rules article attempts to handle absolutely everything. In the majority of cases in which players disagree on who can do what and when, they will *not* have to refer to these charts, but can get by using the following simple rules:

- 1. When both players want to do something, the active player (the player whose turn it is) has priority. That is, the active player decides first what, if anything, to do. (There is one exception to this: while a spell or effect is being cast by either player, the controller of that spell or effect—not necessarily the active player—has priority.)
- 2. When both players are required to do something, the player who currently has priority does so first.
- 3. When an instant, sorcery, or spell that becomes a permanent is played, it doesn't resolve right away. You have to wait for both players to finish responding with instants.
- 4. Once all players are done playing instants, the batch of effects that just accumulated is resolved in last in, first out (LIFO) order.
- 5. Interrupts that target permanents, that target your own spell or effect, or which are untargeted, resolve as soon as they are successfully cast. Interrupts that target another player's spell or effect don't resolve until that player has finished targeting his spell or effect.
- 6. Only the active player decides when to end a phase or start an attack; however, the opponent can prevent the active player from doing this by starting a batch of effects. If the opponent does so, the active player can still try to end a phase or start an attack later.
- 7. Once a batch has started resolving, neither player can do anything until it's done resolving, unless damage prevention or triggered effects are called for.
- 8. When triggered or specialized effects are being used, the active player handles all of his effects first, then the opponent handles hers. Each player handles his or her effects in whichever order he or she chooses.



how To Read The Timing Charts: A Complex Example

he following is a detailed example of how to read the charts, using the Casting of Spell or Effect chart. In this example, the active player casts Ball Lightning, the opponent attempts to counter Ball Lightning with Counterspell, and the active player attempts to counter the Counterspell with Pyroblast.

Ball Lightning begins its trek in the "(spell or effect just played)" chamber, as play has entered from the "Sorcery, summon, or other nonfast effect" corridor in the Standard Effects chart. The active player takes Ball Lightning to the "Was casting countered by triggered effects?" chamber, past the "Triggered Effects" trapdoor. Assuming no effects are triggered, Ball Lightning then passes unharmed into the "Does caster play an interrupt?" chamber.

The caster doesn't want to play an interrupt, so Ball Lightning gets

bounced down the single "no" exit to the "Does caster give up right to target casting further?" chamber. Here the caster only decides temporarily not to play an interrupt; by not giving up the right, he can still play one later if the opponent does anything. Therefore, Ball Lightning travels down this chamber's "no" corridor to "Does opponent play an interrupt?"

The opponent does intend to play an interrupt:
Counterspell. Assuming the opponent already has

• in her pool, she can decide to play the
Counterspell, taking the Ball down the "Yes: targets
this casting" corridor. The first thing in this corridor
is a "CS" trapdoor. The progress of Ball Lightning
must be paused here while play drops down into a
second Casting of Spell or Effect chart.

The Counterspell starts off where the Ball Lightning did: in the "(spell or effect just played)" chamber. Assume again that no effects are triggered, so the Counterspell makes it to "Does caster play an interrupt?" without any problems, and then to "Does opponent play an interrupt?", just as Ball Lightning did. (Note that in this second chart, "caster" refers to the caster of the Counterspell; "opponent" refers to the other player, the active player from the previous chart who originally cast Ball Lightning.)

The opponent (the caster of Ball Lightning) does want to play an interrupt: Pyroblast. Assuming he already has in his pool, he plays



Pyroblast, forcing the Counterspell to exit via "Yes: targets this casting" and run into a "CS" trapdoor. As with the Ball Lightning, the progress of the Counterspell must be paused as play drops through the trapdoor, into a third Casting of Spell or Effect chart.

If we assume the Pyroblast makes it through the Casting chart up to "Return and proceed," then play returns to the second chart, and the

progress of the Counterspell resumes. The next chamber encountered with the Counterspell is "Can caster target this casting?" (Because the second chart was created to track the progress of the Counterspell, "casting" refers to the casting of Counterspell.) The caster of Counterspell hasn't given up the right to target it, so we travel through the "yes" corridor. Resolution of the Pyroblast is put off in the "Delay resolution of interrupt," and play returns to the "Does caster play an interrupt?" chamber.

Since the caster of Counterspell still has no interrupts to play, the Counterspell is returned to the "Does caster give up right to target casting further?" chamber. The answer to this is "yes"; because of the Pyroblast waiting in the wings, the answer to "Do any delayed interrupts target this casting?" is also "yes," so Counterspell goes to the "Resolve earliest delayed interrupt" chamber. Assuming it skips over the "TE" trapdoor (there are no trig-

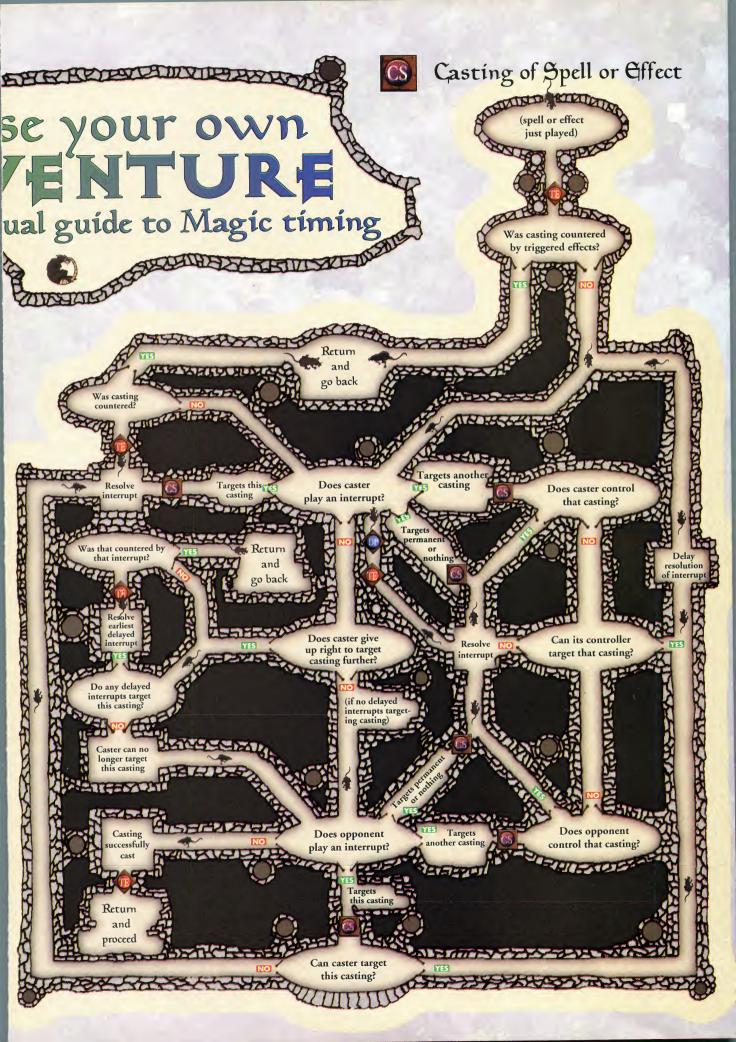
gered effects), you have to ask whether Counterspell is countered by Pyroblast. The answer is "yes," so that corridor is followed to "Return and go back."

This brings us back to Ball Lightning and the first Casting chart. Since the Counterspell was itself countered, the second Casting chart instructed us to "return" to the first chart and "go back" to "Does opponent play an interrupt?" The opponent has no other interrupts to play, so the Lightning exits via the "no" corridor, is successfully cast, and play returns to the Standard Effects chart and proceeds to "Begin batch or add effect to batch."



Return and proceed

Go on to next phase

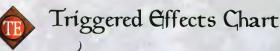


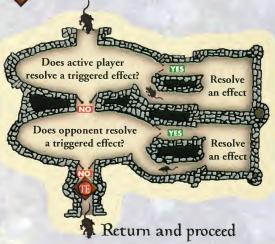


Rat—These helpful critters—aka "directional vermin"—remind you which direction to go in a corridor (all corridors are one-way). Also, if a chamber only has one exit, a rat will be there to show you the way.

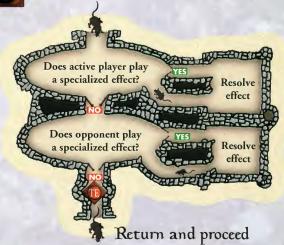
Doors—When there is more than one way to leave a room, doors mark the exits.

(Green shading in corridors)—If a corridor is shaded green, this corridor may only be followed during the active player's main phase and not during an attack.





SE Specialized Effects Chart



Square-shaped trapdoors (mondotory distours to other charts)

- Standard Effects When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Standard Effects chart. (This chart details the flow of a phase and acts as a sort of "master" chart for the other charts.)
- Interrupts—When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Interrupts chart.
- Attack—When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Attack chart.
- Casting of Spell or Effect—When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Casting of Spell or Effect chart.
 - Specialized effects—When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Specialized Effects chart. (Specialized effects are effects which can only be played at a certain time, such as the effects of False Orders, Kjeldoran Guard, and Grizzled Wolverine.)

Diamond-shaped trapdoors (potential detours to other charts)



Damage Prevention—When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Damage Prevention chart if anything has been damaged, destroyed, or buried since the last time you encountered a "DP" trapdoor.



Triggered Effects—When you encounter this trapdoor, you must go to the Triggered Effects chart if any effects have been triggered (e.g., the effects of Psychic Venom, Dingus Egg, Soul Net) since the last time you encountered a "TE" trapdoor.

TIMING: THE FLOW CHART

Take a moment to open the fold-out poster and look over the various charts. You'll notice that it looks like a version of the old Dungeon® board game. The various "chambers" have text of some kind in them, often asking a question, and the "corridors" exiting them typically have text as well. Doors leading out of a chamber indicate that the chamber has multiple exits; if a chamber only has one exit, a rat will point the way out. All the corridors are one-way; when in doubt, follow the rats.

Many of the corridors have text describing the conditions under which they are (or aren't) followed. Squares and diamonds with letters on them represent trapdoors to other charts; for example, if you were in the Standard Effects chart and encountered a "CS" square, you would drop down into the Casting of Spell or Effect chart before returning to Standard Effects. A square-shaped trapdoor indicates that you *must* detour through the appropriate chart; a diamond-shaped trapdoor indicates that you only need to detour *if necessary*. For example, you only go to the Damage Prevention chart if something has been damaged, destroyed, or buried, and can ignore the trapdoor otherwise.

Once you've checked everything out, come back here and I'll show you how to navigate, using the Interrupts chart as an example.

EXAMPLE:



A s with all of the charts, the Interrupts chart is entered from the top. The chart itself contains three chambers, two for deciding whether to play interrupts, and one for resolving interrupts. "Return and proceed" marks the end of the chart; after ending up here, you return to the chart that originally brought you to Interrupts, climbing out of the square-shaped "I" trapdoor that you came through. Finally, there are three other trap doors marking entries into various charts.

The first chamber—"Interrupt by active player?"—presents the active player with a choice of whether or not to play an interrupt. Exiting the chamber are two corridors, labeled "yes" and "no." Play exits through either the "yes" or the "no" corridor, depending on whether the active player does or doesn't play an interrupt.

The "yes" corridor takes us to the "Resolve interrupt" chamber, but we have to drop down through the "CS" trapdoor first. Because the trapdoor is square-shaped, the detour is mandatory; this allows both players a chance to interrupt the interrupt, typically to either counter or modify it.

If the interrupt is countered at some point in the Casting Spell or Effect chart, play returns to the "Interrupt by active player?" chamber (the Casting chart would instruct you to "Return and go back"). If the interrupt is not countered, the

Casting of Spell or Effect chart will instruct you to "Return and proceed" down the corridor to the "Resolve interrupt" chamber.

At this point, the interrupt resolves, its effect is applied, and you can exit the chamber. Note that while there are two corridors connected to the chamber, only one actually leaves it (and a rat is helpfully pointing the way out); because all corridors are one-way, you can't go back through the connecting "yes" corridor. Once in the corridor, you have to make it past two diamond-shaped trapdoors (Triggered Effects and Damage Prevention) before returning to the "Interrupt by active player?" chamber.

The first trapdoor is labeled "TE" for Triggered Effects. If any effects have been triggered since the last "TE" trapdoor, enter the Triggered Effects chart before returning and proceeding further down the corridor. An example of a triggered effect would be Psychic Venom being triggered because the land it enchants has become tapped. The next trapdoor is labeled "DP" for Damage Prevention. If anything has been damaged, destroyed, or buried since the last "DP" trapdoor, enter the Damage Prevention chart. Once you've returned from (or skipped over) these charts, play proceeds to the "Interrupt by active player?" chamber.

Now that you're back in the original chamber, the active player decides again whether or not to play an interrupt. If she does, go down the "yes" corridor again. If the active player decides not to play an interrupt, follow the "no" corridor to the "Interrupt by opponent?" chamber. It is now the opponent's turn to decide whether or not to play an interrupt. If the opponent plays an interrupt, then follow the corridor to the "Resolve Interrupt" chamber, with a mandatory detour through the Casting a Spell or Effect chart. Play proceeds as outlined above. If the opponent declines to play an interrupt, follow the lone rat to the "Return and proceed" exit. Return to "I" trapdoor on the chart which originally brought you to the Interrupts chart and proceed down the corridor.

FINAL NOTES

Navigating the charts should become intuitive with practice, but here are a few thoughts to help your brain wrap around them:

Each phase in the game progresses through the Standard Effects chart, other than the untap phase and heal phase. For example, when you've finished your untap phase, just enter the Standard Effects chart to handle upkeep. After ending upkeep, use the chart to go through each of the other phases, finally exiting to the heal creatures phase. This is how play progresses through a turn.

Some of these charts can "nest": you can enter another copy of the same chart you're currently in. For example, if a player casts a spell while inside the Casting of Spell or Effect chart, the chart will require that you enter a *copy* of the casting chart. You must remember where you've stopped in the first chart and then start over at the chart's entrance to follow the casting of the new spell. (If the active player cast a Fireball and the opponent used a Counterspell to try to counter it, you would have to start over in the Casting of Spell or Effect chart to follow the progress of the Counterspell.) One chart that never "nests" is Damage Prevention: if you're in the Damage Prevention chart and you detour to another chart, ignore any "DP" trapdoors until you return to the Damage Prevention chart.

Finally, the Casting of Spell or Effect chart will be a little more sane if you stay away from the "Targets another casting" corridors. While it's legal for an interrupt to target spells and effects other than the spell it is interrupting, this is never to your advantage in terms of affecting a spell or effect sooner than you should (or after you can't), so it's easier just to ignore those exits.

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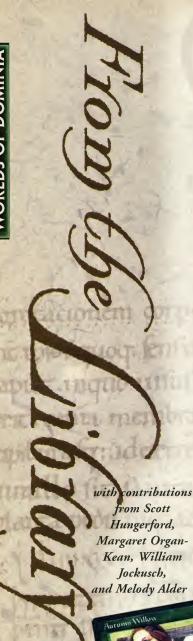
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AUTUMN WILLOW

CARETAKER OF THE WOOD

Autumn Willow is the ruler and protector of the Great Wood in the Homelands. A legend in her own time, she is an incarnation of the power of the forest itself, and those creatures who live among the trees are living extensions of her will. Part of Autumn Willow's strength comes from her unity with nature, for she can only be affected by spells that also affect the land with which she shares her life.

Originally a simple forest spirit, Autumn Willow grew to her current status because of Feroz's Ban, the spell that protected the Homelands from meddling outsiders. Much as placing a rock in a slow-moving stream causes a pool to back up behind it, the mana pouring into the Homelands was backed up when Feroz cast his world spell. As a result, Autumn Willow grew incredibly powerful and achieved sentience and physical form. She ultimately became the guardian and

protector of the place that is the embodiment of her will.

The Folk of An-Havva believe that Autumn Willow is a creature of Faerie. Numerous tales surround the living legend of Autumn Willow and the creatures with whom she interacts. Tales about one of her creations, the Daughter of Autumn, are common throughout the Homelands-stories of a beautiful woman appearing out of the misty air, leading children from danger, or a ghostly apparition freeing an injured woodsman from his own trap. Others tell of encounters with the Willow Priestesses, assumed to be servants of Autumn Willow. Often seen wearing gowns of luminescence and gossamer, these beings seem no more tangible to mortals than a shaft of soft moonlight in the trees. The Spectral Bears that roam the Great Wood are believed to be the personal guardians of Autumn Willow and are often seen escorting caravans from the river bridge to An-Havva. The mere sight of these beasts causes most goblins to

ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE

At first I imagined Autumn Willow as a woman in regal robes. After I read the Homelands background, how-

ever, I found the story of her waning power a sad one and decided that a softer, romantic portrayal would be more appropriate. I also chose to paint her as a human figure due to my background in classical and Renaissance art history, periods in which dryads and

forest goddesses were depicted as women.

I felt that Autumn Willow should be an identifiable person, with her own idiosyncrasies of face and figure, rather than a generic fantasy character. I had wanted to paint artist Kaja Foglio for some time, and this seemed the perfect opportunity. I shot the reference photos in the Foglios' yard, with Kaja wearing a creamy white blouse and a fluorite, amethyst, an sterling-silver necklace I designed. I took the photos at sunset, and that contributed a great deal to the mood I wanted to create.

When I painted this picture, I worked with one of my favorite themes of combining three-dimensional figures that break the flat surface of the paper with two-dimensional patterns that reconfirm its flatness. As I painted, I enjoyed working with the many colors that went into the white of Kaja's shirt and the flesh tones of her face as a result of the reflected light and shadow. The light also

changed the color of her hair to a rich gold. So what might have been a rather pedestrian picture of a woman in a white blouse became one of my favorite works as a result of the early evening light

-Margaret Organ-Kean

PLAYING WITH
AUTUMN WILLOW

reatures are one of the most effective means of dealing damage in Magic, but they're also extremely vulnerable. Most decks have some way to deal with them, using direct damage or cards such as Terror or Swords to Plowshares, but what if a creature cannot be targeted at all? A "bulletproof" creature is not only a difficultto-stop source of damage, but it also makes cards such as Terror and Swords to Plowshares effectively dead draws for your opponent. Autumn Willow is such a creature, a formidable damage-

DUELIST

flee, for there is a tale of a great Spectral Bear that once consumed an entire goblin village, shacks and all, in a single night of feasting.

Autumn Willow gained a motherly affinity for the Folk of An-Havva, but with the settlement of these fragile creatures came new raids from the goblins to the east. She created new creatures from nothingness-giving life and hunger to the Hungry Mist and breathing the host of Faeries into existence-to watch over her Wood. Traders and travelers were allowed to walk the twisty roads, but any creature or being who entered into her foreboding Wood intent on pillage or war rarely returned—presumably hunted down by Spectral Bears, or consumed by Root Spiders, huge arachnids rumored to be as intelligent as small children and capable of catching and eating small horses.

On the evening that Feroz died, Autumn Willow had a vision of Baron Sengir marching the survivors of a terrible war into another world. The sending rang so loudly of prophecy that she had to act upon it. She redoubled her efforts to keep the vampires and undead

from traversing through her Wood and worked harder at maintaining her defenses.

Shortly thereafter, Feroz's Ban started to fail, and she felt the energies that sustained her begin to fade. She knows that with her current strength, she may have a chance at restarting the mana channels, thus, over time, turning the world from a wasteland back into one rich with life. However, this will likely cost the lives of every creature in the Homelands. She is willing to destroy herself and Baron Sengir for the greater good, but she cannot bear to kill the Folk of An-Havva.

But if Autumn Willow doesn't use her power, then the strength of the Homelands will fade until even she ceases to exist, and what she saw in the vision may indeed come true. Now Autumn Willow is at a loss for what to do and is trying to find some third option, some miracle, because to destroy all the ones that she loves brings a cruelty that even a creature derived from balance and nature cannot endure. So she waits for a miracle that will keep her from using the very primal forces of nature against those that she loves more than life.

dealer that's invulnerable to spells and effects that target it. As such, Autumn Willow can provide the backbone of a very effective deck, and another nearly invulnerable creature, Blinking Spirit (0: Return Blinking Spirit to your hand), can provide a nice complement.

With these two creatures to deal damage, the deck needs to be filled out with cards that maintain defense and control. Both Autumn Willow and Blinking Spirit have fairly high casting costs, so you want to protect yourself early on in the game until you have a chance to play them. One method of protection for slower decks is to gain as much life as possible, and cards like Fountain of Youth, Ivory Tower, Reverse Damage, Spirit Link, and Zuran Orb are excellent for this. You may also need to destroy creatures, artifacts, and enchantments, so Arenson's Aura, Disenchant,

Swords to Plowshares,
Hurricane, and Wrath of God
are good choices as well.
Finally, you want to have control of what's on the playing
field. Cards like Sylvan
Library, Forgotten Lore, Jalum
Tome, Barbed Sextant, and
Land Tax help you quickly
cycle through your library.

Your main concern is to keep in mind Autumn Willow's strengths and keep from inadvertently countering them. For example, while Fyndhorn or Llanowar Elves seem like good additions to the deck—they provide fast mana for getting out your expensive creaturesyour opponent will probably have a hand full of anti-creature cards that she hasn't been able to use on Autumn Willow and Blinking Spirit. This deck capitalizes on your opponent's having dead cards in her hand, and if she can't use her Terror on Autumn Willow, she will most certainly use it on Elves.

"The Untouchables":

- 4 Autumn Willow
- 2 Hurricane
- 1 Sylvan Library
- 1 Forgotten Lore
- 1 Primal Order
- 4 Blinking Spirit
- 4 Swords to Plowshares
- 4 Wrath of God
- 1 Reverse Damage
- 2 Disenchant
- 2 Spirit Link
- 1 Divine Offering
- 1 Land Tax
- 1 Arenson's Aura
- 1 Balance
- 1 Jalum Tome
- 1 Ivory Tower
- 1 Fountain of Youth
- 1 Zuran Orb
- 2 Barbed Sextant
- 1 Icy Manipulator
- 11 Forest
- 13 Plains
- -Melody Alder



Wizards of the Coast Introduces Professional Tournament Circuit

by Jeff J. Lin

Wizards of the Coast has unveiled plans for a series of professional Magic: The Gathering® tournaments in 1996 with its Black Lotus Professional Tour.

The kick-off event, to be held Presidents' Day weekend, Feb. 16-18 in New York City at the Puck Building (295 Lafayette St.), will feature two tournaments with a combined purse of \$60,000.

According to Skaff Elias, the tour concept designer, there will be at least five events in 1996 as part of the Pro Tour, each of which will take place in different cities throughout the U.S.

"The professional tournament events next year are an attempt to reward intelligent and competitive players, and to show the viability of Magic as an intellectual sport," said Elias. "We believe that classic games are undervalued as sport in our society, and Magic has the potential to be one of the truly classic games."

The New York tournament will be split into two divisions, a Senior division and a Junior division for players ages 18 and under. Each tournament will have a total purse of \$30,000, with the first-place player winning \$12,000. Junior division winners will be awarded prizes in the form of scholarships instead of cash.

The Senior competition will be a 256-player, Swiss-style tournament, with single-elimination finals. The play format will be Type II constructed deck, with the added requirement that players must have a minimum of five cards from *Fourth Edition*TM and

each available expansion (*Fallen Empires*[™], *Ice Age*[™], *Chronicles*[™], *Homelands*[™]) in their decks and/or sideboards.

Elias said that play format will vary from one professional tournament to the next. "We want to showcase all the different ways to play Magic, so expect to see a lot of variety in the events," he said. "A large part of Magic's appeal is the variety of ways it can be played, and we hope the Pro Tour sends this message to the players, as well as providing a high-profile forum for us to suggest new ways to play."

But fans of the standard formats shouldn't despair. "Expect to see Type I, Type II, and Sealed-Deck tournaments at the professional level," he said. "All three of these event types will be the mainstay of DC (Duelists' Convocation) tournaments next year, and testing players' skills in these areas will be crucial."

Competitors in the Pro Tour will be awarded points based on performance in Black Lotus events over the course of 1996. "At the end of the year [we will] crown an overall winner," said Elias. "This winner will have to show skill at many different formats, and will ideally know Magic well enough to adapt to any format."

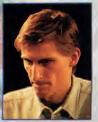
In order to ensure a high level of competition, tournament organizers invited many of the best **Magic** players in the world to compete in New York, among them: all the competitors from the 1995 World Championships held last August, the twenty-five top-

A LOOK AT THE TOP CONTENDERS

The professional tournament at the Puck Building in New York City Feb. 16-18 has attracted many of the top Magic players in the world. Players from Italy, Switzerland, the United States, France, Finland, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Australia, England, and Canada will all be vying for a \$30,000 purse.

In addition to most of the participants in the 1995 World Championship, the top eight finishers from the '95 U.S. Nationals, the top two finishers from each of last year's U.S. Regional championships, and the twenty-five top-ranked Duelists' Convocation members were all invited to participate. Most have confirmed that they will compete.

This first professional tournament promises to be the largest assembly of top Magic players in any one competition to date. Here, in no particular order, are some names to look for among the contenders:



Alexander Blumke:
Blumke, from
Geneva, Switzerland,
is the current World
Champion. A cautious, deliberate player
who always seems to
win when it counts,

Blumke first made his way through the Swiss championship, and struggled through the qualifying rounds at the World Championship.



Marc Hernandez: Hernandez, the 1995

Hernandez, the 1995 French champion, was the runner-up at last year's World Champion-ships. The Paris resident is consistently ranked

among France's top five players and plays in tournaments across Europe.



Chip Hogan:

Hogan (see profile, p. 86) won his tournament spot by winning one of the *Homelands* premiere tournaments in New York last October. Mistakes

kept him from qualifying for last year's U.S. Nationals. The reigning Type I National Champion, Hogan is anxious to prove himself in Type II environments.

ranked Duelists' Convocation members; the top eight finishers at the 1995 U.S. Nationals; and the top two finishers from each of the 1995 U.S. Regional championships. Remaining spots in the tournament were opened to the public Dec. 14 and sold out within two hours.

"The tournaments right now include both invitations to topranked DC members and some 'open' slots," said Elias.

"Eventually, just as in a professional sport, for the highest-level tournaments, we hope to have *all* the players qualify based on skill.

"Eventually this will mean players with high DC rankings, or those that have done well in 'open' sanctioned tournaments, will be the ones given slots to participate in the premier events."

According to Mark Rosewater, the Pro Tour's player liaison, the professional tournaments are an attempt to stratify **Magic** play. "We're trying to create a system where there are layers of players," he said. "There will be the top professional **Magic** players, who can make a living off playing **Magic**." The second level would consist of people in "feeder" tournaments, regional tournaments where players would be able to earn spots in the professional events.

The third level would be composed of those who play in local tournaments but not in the larger area tournaments.

"We will have partners running smaller events which feed the larger ones, so players at any level can participate in play," Elias said.

Another goal of the professional tournaments is to build up **Magic** as a spectator sport.

Organizers are planning to charge \$10 for tickets to the event.

With the advent of big-league money into **Magic**, however, the possibility of big-league cheating has become a major concern. "Security at the first event will be high," said Elias. "We will be watching closely for misplays and cheating. Cheating may result in the player being banned from all future tournaments, as well as the Duelists' Convocation."

Plans for the second professional event are already being finalized. The event has tentatively been scheduled to be held in Long Beach, CA, the first weekend in May. There has been no confirmation on the prize purse, though organizers say it should be substantially larger than the first. "The prizes should only grow for the big events," said Elias.

Other future plans include holding some of the Pro Tour events abroad. "[Some of the tournaments will be held] eventually in Europe, because we want to give as much access to the circuit as possible," Elias said. "Magic is played across the globe, so the tournaments should be held worldwide as well."



Mark Justice:

The current U.S. Champion, Justice, from West Valley City, Utah, made it to the round of four in the 1995 World Championships. At the U.S. Nationals,



he won two sanctioned Type I tournaments while the preliminary qualifying rounds were being run.

Bertrand Lestree: Lestree, from France, was the 1994 French Champion and the 1994 World Championship runner-up. Lestree was ejected from last year's French National Championships after a dispute with a judge.

Lestree's desire for a rematch with '94 champion Zak Dolan, who is also competing, is great. "I will be really pleased to play against

Zak Dolan again," he says. "He was too lucky last time."

Ivan Curina: Curina, the current Italian National Champion, placed in the top eight at the 1995 World Championship. Teammate Andrea Redi also made it to the final eight at the World Championship last year.

Henry Stern: Stern, from Los Angeles, made it to the semifinals at the World



Championship last year before losing to France's Marc Hernandez. He finished the championships tied for the most individual points. Stern was ranked in the

Duelists' Convocation Top 25 in 1995.

An aerospace engineer by trade, Stern

uses mathematical models and statistical analysis to aid his deck construction and play strategies.

Henri Schmidt: This 18-year-old student from Helsinki, Finland, was the youngest competitor to place in the top eight at the World Championships last year.

Mu Luen Wang: The 1995 Austrian National Champion, Wang made it to



the round of eight at last year's World
Championships.
Highly competitive,
Wang actually armwrestled a competitor during the World
Championship for
the right to go first.

WIZARDS OF THE COAST'S EXPERIMENTAL TOURNAMENT SYSTEM

Created by the Magic R&D team and compiled by Rich McGatha and Mark Rosewater



Want to try a new Magic tournament format? The Magic R&D team (the people who develop all Magic cards) has created an experimental, point-based, deck-construction system that allows a great deal of freedom while still ensuring game balance.

The idea of setting up a system of restrictions is neither new nor unfamiliar to most players. When Magic: The Gathering® was created, players could have as many of a particular card in their decks as they wanted, with Plague Rats being a perfect example of a card intended to increase in potency as it grew in number. Unfortunately, this idea didn't work in practice. Certain cards proved too degenerate and the Duelists' Convocation instituted deck-construction rules (no banned cards, one of each restricted card, and only four of any other card). These rules were quickly adopted by players, ending the chance of ever playing a mean, tournament-level Plague Rat deck.

Realizing that most cards were not a problem in large numbers, the **Magic** R&D team created a new tournament type, one that allows players to use multiples of most cards but that limited the number of degenerate cards in any one deck. The end result is as follows; enjoy, and may your Plague Rats flourish.

Deck-Construction Guidelines

- Your deck must contain at least sixty cards.
- You may have no more than ten of any one card in your deck and sideboard.
- Any card not appearing on the Card Point Values list has a value of zero.
- You may have no more than twenty points in your deck and sideboard. You have three sideboard options under this system:

Option 1: No Sideboard for zero points.

Option 2: A ten-card sideboard for one point.

Option 3: A twenty-card sideboard for two points.

• The following cards are banned in this tournament structure:

—Ante cards

—Divine Intervention

—Chaos Orb —Shahrazad —Falling Star

CARD POINT VALUES

Air Elemental	1	Lightning Bolt	2
Ali from Cairo	3	Mahamoti Djinn	1
Ancestral Recall	5	Mana Drain	2
Armageddon	2	Maze of Ith	4
Army of Allah	1	Mind Twist	3
Ashnod's Altar	3	Mirror Universe	3
Badlands	1	Mishra's Factory	1
Balance	4	Mishra's Workshop	5
Ball Lightning	1	Mox Emerald	3
Bayou	1	Mox Jet	3
Bazaar of Baghdad	1	Mox Pearl	3
Berserk	4	Mox Ruby	3
Black Lotus	5	Mox Sapphire	3
Black Vise	3	Nether Void	2
Blood Lust	1	Old Man of the Sea	1
Braingeyser	3	Orcish Lumberjack	1
Candelabra of Tawnos	4	Plateau	1
Chain Lightning	2	Preacher	1
Channel	6	Psionic Blast	2
Clone	1	The Rack	1
Control Magic	1	Regrowth	2
Copy Artifact	3	Relic Barrier	1
Counterspell	2	Rukh Egg	1
Dance of Many	1	Savannah	1
Dark Banishing	1	Scrubland	1
Dark Ritual	2	Sedge Troll	1
Deflection	1	Sengir Vampire	1
Demonic Consultation	1	Serendib Efreet	2
Demonic Tutor	3	Serra Angel	1
Desert	1	Shivan Dragon	1
Diamond Valley	1	Sinkhole	3
Disenchant	1	Sol Ring	4
Dragon Whelp	1	Spirit Link	1
Drop of Honey	3	Stasis	1
Erhnam Djinn	1	Strip Mine	3
Eureka	2	Swords to Plowshares	2
Forcefield	3	Taiga	1
Fork	4	Terror	1
Gauntlet of Might	2	The Abyss	3
Giant Growth	2	Time Elemental	1
Goblin Grenade	1	Time Walk	4
Guardian Beast	2	Timetwister	6
Hymn to Tourach	2	Tropical Island	1
Hypnotic Specter	1	Tundra	1
Icy Manipulator	1	Underground Sea	1
Incinerate	1	Underworld Dreams	1
	4		
Ivory Tower	1	Unstable Mutation	1
Jester's Cap	1	Volcanic Island Wheel of Fortune	1 4
Juggernaut			
Juzam Djinn	1 2	Word of Command Wrath of God	3 2
Kird Ape	2		
Land Tax	5	Zuran Orb	3
Library of Alexandria)	Zur's Weirding	1



DUELISTS' CONVOCATION

NORTH AMERICA

A WORD FROM THE STAFF

The Duelists' Convocation is pleased to present the official sanctioned tournament rules for Vampire: The Eternal Struggle. These rules were designed to accommodate players who wish to build tournament decks with cards from both Vampire: The Eternal Struggle and Jyhad™, as well as from Dark Sovereigns™ and future expansions. We think these rules reflect a well-balanced tournament environment that will provide an exciting challenge to veteran players and novices alike. The DC would like to thank Matt Burke, Tom Wylie, Paul Peterson, and Steve Bishop for their assistance in creating these rules. Let the bleeding begin!

We're also happy to bring you the final installment of the sanctioned Magic: The Gathering™ tournament rules: Sealed Deck! This tournament format is rapidly becoming a favorite of players all over the world. While the luck factor is somewhat higher than in constructed-deck tournaments (such as Type I and Type II), most players agree that such a limited environment is also an excellent test of skill. As Chip Hogan, one of the winners of the Magic: The

Gathering I *Homelands*TM sealed-deck tournament said, "Sealed Deck is cool! It forces a player to consider cards he might not normally include in a tournament deck; it also teaches you to use cards in new ways you never thought of before."

The Duelists' Convocation would also like to take this opportunity to introduce to you its 1996 core staff. These are the people whose dedication and enthusiasm makes it possible for players around the world to enjoy sanctioned tournaments.

Jason Carl, Director Heather Henricks, Project Coordinator Logan Grey, Ratings Administrator Rikkí Beatty, Membership Agent Tres Henry, Sanctioning Agent

CHANGES MADE TO
TOURNAMENT RANKING SYSTEM

A nother new change for 1996 that should be of interest to tournament competitors is the Duelists' Convocation's new policy of tracking the ratings of *all* participants in sanctioned tournaments, including non-DC members. Note that the ratings for non-DC

members will not be publicly available and do not make that player eligible to compete in the events leading to the World Championship (until that player joins the DC).

For DC members, this means that every match you play in a sanctioned tournament will be rated, rather than just matches against other DC members. Now members will be able to reach established rating status much more rapidly than was previously possible, and their rating will be much more indicative of their actual skill level in the real world, not just within the ranks of the DC.

Additions to the Banned and Restricted Lists

s of January 1, 1996, Mind Twist is added to the Duelists' Convocation Type I and Type II Banned Lists, and Black Vise has been added to the Restricted Lists. These changes are effective as of February 1, 1996. (Do you think that the DC should restrict Black Vise and other powerful cards in Type II tournaments, but not Type I? Respond to the At Issue question, pg. 124.)

THE DUELISTS' CONVOCATION

WotC's Official **Deckmaster** Games Organization P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please return this form or a photocopy of this form, along with the \$18.00 annual membership fee (U.S. funds), to The Duelists' Convocation.

The Duelists' Convocation reserves the right to change membership fees without prior notice.

OFFICIAL MAGIC: THE GATHERING SEALED-DECK TOURNAMENT RULES

DECK CONSTRUCTION RULES

The standard rules for Magic: The Gathering apply to sanctioned tournament play, except where amended by these rules. In cases where the official tournament rules differ from the basic rules of Magic, the official tournament rules take precedence.

- 1. Decks may be constructed using the contents of 1 (one) sealed starter deck (60 cards) of the latest edition of **Magic:** The **Gathering** cards or 1 (one) sealed starter deck (60 cards) from any currently available (as determined by the Duelists' Convocation) **Magic:** The **Gathering** stand-alone expansion (e.g., *Ice Age™*), and any combination of the following, which must result in a starting total of 80 (eighty) to 120 (one hundred and twenty) cards.
- **a.** The latest edition **Magic:** The **Gathering** sealed booster pack.
- **b.** The latest edition *Chronicles*[™] sealed booster pack.
- c. Any currently available (as determined by the Duelists' Convocation) Magic: The Gathering stand-alone expansion
- (e.g. *Ice Age*) sealed booster pack. **d.** Any currently available (as determined by the Duelists' Convocation) **Magic:**

The Gathering limited expansion (e.g. *Homelands*) sealed booster pack.

- e. The latest edition (as determined by the Duelists' Convocation) Magic: The Gathering sealed starter deck.
- **f.** Any currently available (as determined by the Duelists' Convocation) **Magic: The Gathering** stand-alone expansion (e.g. *Ice Age*) sealed starter deck.
- Note on play with non-English language cards: All elements of official tournament play where translational differences may appear (such as differences in card title, card text, rules, tournament rules, or rulings) will be interpreted according to the most current Englishlanguage versions.
- 2. The tournament deck must contain a minimum of 40 (forty) cards, with no imposed maximum. In Sealed-Deck play, any cards from the starter deck and boost-

er(s) not used in the tournament deck will function as that player's Sideboard. The total number of cards in a player's deck and Sideboard combined may change during the course of play, as Sealed-Deck tournaments require the wagering of ante (see Modifications to Standard Floor Rules #4, below). The use of the Sideboard is further explained in the Modifications to Standard Floor Rules #3.

Important note: New releases of Magic: The Gathering (e.g. a new expansion or new edition of the basic set) may be used in sanctioned Sealed-Deck tournament play immediately on the date of retail release, provided the tournament coordinator supplies them for the tournament.

3. Due to the natural limiting effect of Sealed-Deck play, as well as the fact that ante must be wagered in the Sealed-Deck tournament, there are neither Restricted nor Banned Lists for this style of tournament.

Optional Rule: At the Judge's discretion, players may add exactly 4 (four) basic lands of their choice to the deck. These land cards must be issued by the tournament staff after the deck construction period (see Sealed-Deck Floor Rule #SD2) and in such a way as to take care that each player receives up to, but not more than, 4 (four) additional basic lands. (Using the player sign-in list or checkmarking the players' index cards as they receive their lands may be good methods.) This pool of basic lands can be from an individual collection, or can be formed by having each player donate one of each basic land to create the pool as part of any entry fees at the tournament.

SEALED-DECK FLOOR RULES

Sealed-Deck tournaments will use the Standard Floor Rules, except for the following additions and modifications to the Standard Floor Rules. There are four additional Floor Rules specific to a Sealed-Deck tournament.

SD1. Players are responsible for provid-

ing their own sealed decks and boosters for use in the tournament, except in cases where the decks and boosters are provided for them by the tournament organizers. If an entry fee is charged for the tournament, the fee shall not exceed the manufacturer's suggested retail price plus applicable sales tax for the cards allotted to and received by the player, plus an additional amount within the normal sanctioning parameters allowable by the sanctioning Duelists' Convocation office.

SD2. Prior to the first round's pairings, the Judge should allow a period of 45 (forty-five) minutes for players to construct their decks. All players in the tournament must open and construct their tournament decks during the same 45 (forty-five) minute period. The Judge must announce a warning to the players at the 40 (forty) minute mark that only 5 (five) minutes remain in the deckconstruction time period. Players must have their decks constructed prior to the end of this allotted time. If a player has not completed deck construction at the end of the allotted time, this may be interpreted by the Judge as a Declaration of Forfeiture. In the event that all players in the tournament have completed deck construction prior to the end of the 45 (forty-five) minutes, the tournament may commence without delay.

SD3. A player may not open his or her sealed deck or booster(s) prior to the beginning of the time period allotted by the Judge.

SD4. At no time prior to or during the tournament will trading of cards from the Sealed-Deck tournament deck or Sideboard be permitted between players or bystanders.

MODIFICATIONS TO STANDARD FLOOR RULES

Note: Rule numbers below correspond to Standard Floor Rules rule numbers.

3. As written, but cards from the

Background by Amy Weber

Sideboard need not be traded into the deck on a one-for-one basis; any number of cards may be added to or subtracted from the deck, provided that the playing deck contains a minimum of 40 (forty) cards when finished. Additionally, the requirement of Sideboards containing exactly 15 (fifteen) cards is dropped.

4. In Sealed-Deck tournaments, players are required to wager ante. Cards won as ante may be introduced into the playing deck at any time that a Sideboard use is allowed (i.e., in between duels or match-

es). A player unable to field a deck of at least 40 (forty) cards no longer has a legal deck and will be removed from the tournament.

Note: Standard Floor Rule #11 (Judge's right to terminate an excessively long match) may come into play more often in a Sealed-Deck tournament, as many decks constructed from such a limited environment may grind into a near-stalemate situation when played against one another. Therefore, if any time limits are imposed per round, it may be desirable to extend the limit to 60 or 90 minutes,

depending on the tournament. This extension is entirely at the Judge's discretion and must be advertised in advance or announced to all players at the beginning of the tournament.

Rules note: The Director of the Duelists'
Convocation reserves the exclusive right to
add, delete, alter, polymorph, switch, colorlace, sleight of mind, magical hack, or in any
other way change these or any other official
Duelists' Convocation rules, in whole or in
part, with or without notice, at any time
that it is deemed necessary or desirable.

OFFICIAL VAMPIRE: THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE TOURNAMENT RULES

DECK CONSTRUCTION RULES

1. Vampire: The Eternal Struggle tournament decks may be built using cards from the Jyhad, Vampire: The Eternal Struggle and Dark Sovereigns card sets. Cards from new releases may not be included in sanctioned tournament play until 30 (thirty) days following the retail release date. If you use cards from more than one set, read the rules on marked decks (see Deck Construction Rules #5).

Optional Rule: Prior to the beginning of a sanctioned tournament, the Judge may declare that players who build decks from cards from both Jyhad and Vampire:

The Eternal Struggle sets should ensure that between forty and sixty percent of their library be from the Jyhad set. The tournament coordinator must announce and advertise use of this rule prior to the start of the tournament.

2. The crypt must contain a minimum of 12 (twelve) Vampire cards. The crypt can be made up of Vampires from either the **Jyhad** or **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle** card sets, *but not both*. There is no maximum on the number of Vampires that can be in your crypt. The library will contain a minimum of 60 (sixty) cards and maximum of 90 (ninety) cards total.

3. The Restricted List:

No more than 6 (six) of each of the cards on the Restricted List is allowed in a **Vampire: The Eternal Struggle** tournament deck. If more than 6 (six) of any individual card from the Restricted List is found in a player's deck, that will be interpreted by the Judge as a Declaration of Forfeiture. The Restricted List may be modified by the Director of the Duelists' Convocation as necessary. The Restricted List is as follows:

- •Ancilla Empowerment
- Conservative Agitation
- Domain Challenge
- Earth Meld
- The Fifth Tradition: Hospitality
- Form of Mist
- Freak Drive
- Kine Resources Contested
- Majesty
- Parity Shift
- Sabbat Threat

4. The Banned List:

The following cards are banned from tournament play:

- Cunctator Motion
- High Stakes
- Rowan Ring
- Stake (from Jyhad)
- Monocle of Clarity
- Playing For Keeps



Some cards on the Banned List are not allowed because they clearly state that they are only usable if playing for ante. Wagering ante is not required in a Vampire: The Eternal Struggle tournament (see General Floor Rules #2). Any future cards that make the same statement will subsequently be banned. This list may be modified by the Director of the Duelists' Convocation as necessary.

5. Marked Decks. If a contestant, Assistant Referee, or Judge has reason to believe another contestant has marked his or her deck, the Referee or Judge may inspect the deck. If any of the deck-stacking restrictions described below are breached, this is considered a Declaration of Forfeiture, and the contestant will be removed from the tournament.

All library cards from the Jyhad or Vampire: The Eternal Struggle card sets must be of sufficiently mixed card types—that is, Master and Dominate cards must appear with both Jyhad backs and Vampire: The Eternal Struggle backs, or Jyhad cards must include at least three different card types. All crypt cards must appear with either Jyhad backs or Vampire: The Eternal Struggle backs. They cannot have both.

ADJUDICATION AND PLAYING AREAS

1. Vampire: The Eternal Struggle tournaments will be presided over by a Judge, who may be assisted by as many Assistant Referees as necessary. Neither the Judge

Background by Amy Webe

nor the Assistant Referees may play in a tournament that they are adjudicating. A Judge may be required to interpret rules, interpret a Declaration of Forfeiture, or make any other adjudication as necessary during the tournament. The Judge is also responsible for maintaining the tournament records. Assistant Referees will aid by answering rules questions on the floor, assisting with matching players for a new round, and making themselves available to the Judge for any other required assistance. The Judge may overrule any decision made by an Assistant Referee. The decision of the Judge is always final.

- 2. A "table" is defined as a playing area where four or five players are competing in a game of Vampire: The Eternal Struggle in a Vampire: The Eternal Struggle tournament. A Vampire: The Eternal Struggle tournament must have a minimum of 12 (twelve) players, and a minimum of 3 (three) tables per round (excluding finals). Each table must have a minimum of 4 (four) players at the start of the game.
- 3. An index card (or reasonable facsimile) with a player's name and other tournament information will be prepared for each player in the tournament. Cards will be shuffled and grouped randomly before tables are assigned for each round of the tournament (excluding finals). Alternatively, tournaments may use a computerized system for generating random groupings for each round, provided that the Judge can keep accurate records of each player's points throughout the tournament.
- 4. For each round, players will be randomly assigned in groups of 5 (five). In the event that the number of players is not evenly divisible by five, players should be assigned in groups of four and five; most groups should consist of five players.
- 5. Each table has five positions (numbered one through five) arranged clockwise around the table. The first player assigned to a table occupies position one, the second player occupies position two, and so on. When play begins for the round, the player in position one plays first (with one transfer allowed), followed

by the player in position two (with two transfers allowed), and so forth. At tables with only four players, the empty position for turn rotation is ignored.

GENERAL FLOOR RULES

- 1. Players must use the same deck they have at the beginning of the tournament throughout the tournament. Changing or altering a tournament deck during the tournament may be interpreted by the Judge as a Declaration of Forfeiture.
- 2. Players are not required to wager ante during the tournament. Players may play for ante, provided that all participants at the table give their consent, though this agreement does not allow the inclusion of banned ante cards in a tournament deck. Ante cards won in a tournament must be kept separate from the tournament deck and may not be used in the tournament in any capacity. If the loss of ante cards from a player's deck reduces the deck below 60 (sixty) cards, the player no longer has a legal tournament deck and will be removed from the tournament.
- 3. The use of plastic card sleeves or other protective devices on players' cards will only be allowed if all players at the table agree to allow them in the round. If any player at the table does not wish card sleeves to be used in the round for any reason, all sleeves must be removed from all decks at that table for the duration of the round.
- 4. The use of "proxy" cards in the tournament deck is not allowed. A proxy card is one that has been placed into the deck to represent another card. For example, using a card with the words "Aaron's Feeding Razor" written on it because the player doesn't want to play with his actual Aaron's Feeding Razor will not be permitted.
- 5. Players must keep the cards in their hands above the level of the playing surface at all times. If any player violates this rule, the Judge may issue a warning to the player or interpret the violation as a Declaration of Forfeiture, at the Judge's discretion.
- 6. Players may not have any outside assistance during a match. If a player violates

- this rule, the Judge may issue a warning to the player or interpret the violation as a Declaration of Forfeiture, at the Judge's discretion.
- 7. Unsportsmanlike conduct will not be tolerated at a tournament. Players, Judges, and Assistant Referees will conduct themselves in a polite, respectable, and sportsmanlike manner. Any player who is excessively belligerent, argumentative, hostile, or unsportsmanlike may receive a warning or have this behavior interpreted as a Declaration of Forfeiture, at the Judge's discretion.
- 8. Players must take their turns in a timely fashion. While taking time to think through a situation is acceptable, stalling for time is not. If the Judge feels that a player is stalling to take advantage of a time limit, the Judge may issue a warning or interpret the stalling as a Declaration of Forfeiture, at the Judge's discretion.

SCORING

- 1. One player at each table will be appointed as that table's scorekeeper by a tournament official. At the conclusion of each round, a tournament official will collect the scores for that table from the scorekeeper and register the standings with the Judge.
- 2. There are three different types of points used in a Vampire: The Eternal Struggle tournament. They are listed here in descending order of status. Victory points are awarded when a player's prey is ousted and when a player survives a round. Tournament points are awarded based on a player's table ranking at the end of a round. Blood points are awarded based on the amount of blood a player controls at the end of a round. Victory points are the primary indicator, with tournament points and blood points used as the firstand second-degree tiebreakers.
- 3. A player receives 1 (one) victory point each time he or she ousts his or her prey during the game. A player receives an additional half victory point if he or she has not been ousted by the end of the round, unless that player is the last one surviving at the table, in which case, he or she gets a full victory point (as outlined in

the Vampire: The Eternal Struggle rules). Players are then ranked at their table from First to Fifth, where the player with the most victory points places First. 4. Tournament points are awarded each round as follows, provided that table had five players at the beginning of the round: First = 60 pts., Second = 48 pts., Third = 36 pts., Fourth = 24 pts., Fifth = 12 pts. If only four players are at a table, they are ranked as First, Second, Fourth, and Fifth—the Third place slot is taken by the "table bye" (an empty position). If more than one player is tied for a certain table ranking, the tournament points contended will be averaged (see Scoring Examples below).

Scoring Examples:

Example 1: Five players are at the table. Players A and B each ousted one prey and survived the round. Players C and D were the unfortunates ousted by A and B, and they did not oust any prey. Player E ousted no one, but survived the round. Players A and B each receive one-andone-half victory points (one oust plus survival each); player E receives one-half (for surviving); and players C and D receive no victory points. Players A and B tie for First (which really means First and Second), so they each receive 54 Tournament points ([60+48] / 2 = 54). Player E is clearly Third, and receives 36 Tournament points. Players C and D tie for Fourth (Fourth and Fifth), and each receives 18 tournament points ([24+12] / 2 = 18).

Example 2: Four players are at the table. Player A ousts one prey and survives the round. Neither player B nor C ousted prey, but both survived. Player D was player A's victim. Player A receives one-and-one-half victory points; players B and C each get one-half of a point; and player D gets no points. Player A is clearly First, receiving 60 tournament points. Players B and C tie for Second (which is really Second and Fourth because Third goes to the "table bye") and each receives 36 tournament

points ([48+24 / 2 = 36]). Player D is in Fifth with 12 tournament points.

5. Additionally, at the end of the round, each player must count the number of blood points he or she has left. Each player adds all of the blood left in his or her blood pool to the amount of blood on all of the active Vampires he or she controls. Players report this number to the scorekeeper, who verifies that the count is accurate. Blood points may be used as a second-degree tiebreaker, though this may be rare.

ROUNDS

1. Each round of the tournament must have a time limit declared by the Judge, with a minimum time limit of 2 (two) hours. The tournament coordinator must announce and advertise this time limit prior to the tournament. During the first 20 (twenty) minutes, officials record any scoring from the previous round and reassign players to new matches; this is followed by a playing period of 1 (one) hour and 40 (forty) minutes. All players begin play at the same time. If all of the twenty minute set-up time isn't used, the remainder of the time may be added to the playing period. When only 5 (five) minutes remain in the allotted tournament time, the Judge should issue a five-minute warning.

2. All play from a round will cease immediately when the Judge announces that the round is over. Players in mid-turn will be permitted to complete that turn before scores are calculated, up to a maximum time of one minute. "A player in midturn" is defined as a someone who,



during his or her turn, has finished untapping all of his or her cards in play that could be untapped at that time. 3. Each tournament must consist of a number of rounds determined by the Judge, with a minimum of 3 (three) rounds. The 5 (five) players with the highest total victory points from all three rounds advance to the final round. In a tie, the player with more tournament points from prior rounds advances to the final (first-degree tiebreaker). If players are still tied, the player with the largest total blood pool from prior rounds advances (second-degree tiebreaker). Finalists will be rated First through Fifth by victory points.

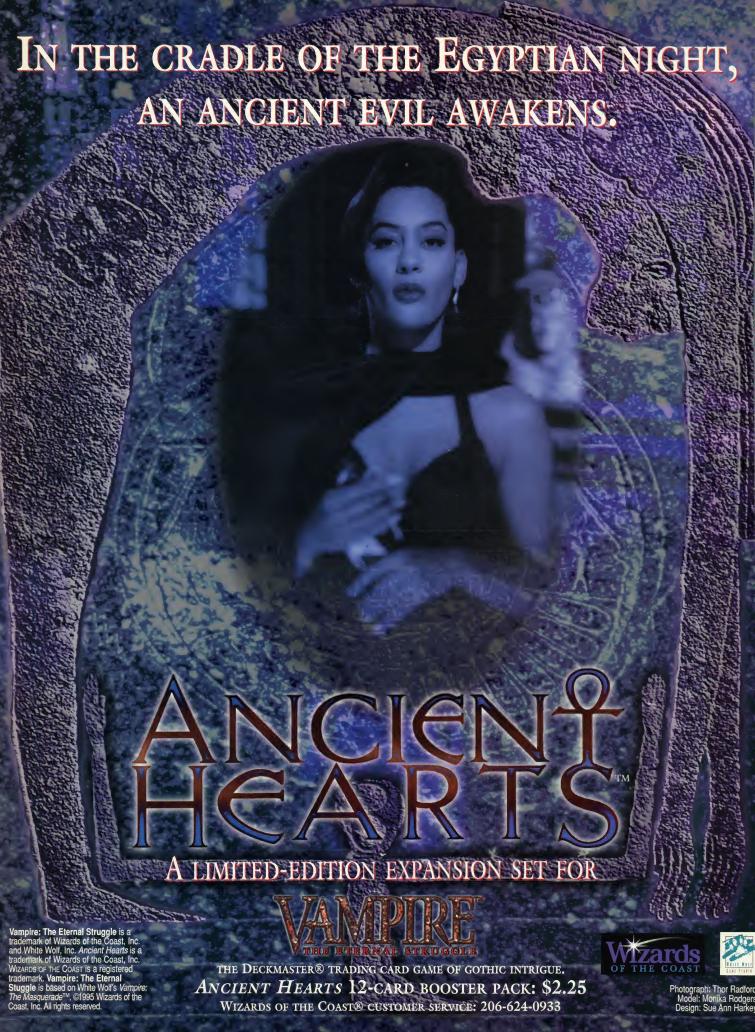
FINALS

1. Table positions are not assigned in the final round. Instead, the first finalist has his or her choice of position, then the second finalist, and so on. Play for the final round commences normally.

2. At the conclusion of the final round, the player with the most victory points from the final round alone is the winner of the tournament, with other players ranked accordingly by victory points. In case of ties, blood points from the final round alone are used as the tiebreaker.

Failure to adhere to the above rules, or any other rules specific to a particular tournament, may be interpreted by the Judge as a Declaration of Forfeiture. Only the Judge may make an interpretation of a Declaration of Forfeiture.

Rules note: The Director of the Duelists' Convocation reserves the exclusive right to add, delete, alter, transmute, switch, revise in second edition, seduce, Blood Bond, Dominate, Obfuscate, vote in or out with any Primogen, Prince, or Justicar that ever has been or ever will be printed, or in any other way change these or any other official Duelists' Convocation rules, in whole or in part, with or without notice, at any time that it is deemed necessary or desirable. This right is non-negotiable.



The Duelist Interviews

RANDY GALLEGOS

by Jenny Scott & Amy Weber



his has been a good month for Randy Gallegos. It started on the first of the month, when Duelist art director Amy Weber called to see if he'd like to be the next cover artist. Later in the month, Randy realized he was finally making enough from his freelance illustration career to quit his day job doing human modeling for a software development company. And today, the thirty-first day of October, it's not only Halloween, it's Randy's birthday. This tal-

ented young man,
whose use of light and
mood would be impressive in an artist twenty
years his senior, is turning twenty-one today.

A driven, practical person with an intense work ethic, Randy left California College of Arts and Crafts in May of 1994, when he had "gotten everything out of it that [he] wanted to." At about the same

time, Randy got his first professional assignment: He took his portfolio to a Bay Area game store where Jesper Myrfors (Magic™ artist and former art director for Wizards of the Coast) was doing a signing. Randy says he gave Jesper a sheet of slides and a slide viewer and surrounded him with paintings (some of which were enormous—Randy prefers to work large). After reviewing his work, Jesper's first words to him were, "Would you like to work on Jyhad™?"

Randy immediately agreed, and he's been working ever since, illustrating games known for their high standards for art: Magic, Vampire[™], Shadowfist[™], Legend of the Five Rings[™], and Middleearth: The Wizards[™], among others. In fact, some of Randy's best work will appear soon in Wizards of the Coast's new cyberpunk TCG, Netrunner[™].

Born and raised in San Jose, California, Randy cites the opportunity to travel as one of the great things about being a Magic artist. He attends many industry conventions, where he signs cards, spends time with other artists, and

meets with prospective clients, and he tries to visit Wizards of the Coast in the Seattle area from time to time. On this visit, Randy has brought with him his girlfriend of six years, Monica Pavlick. Randy says that she is "half responsible for [his success], because she criticizes strongly." Monica believes that no one

deserves that success more than Randy, whose self-motivation and determination, she tells us, inspire her immensely. We, too, are inspired by Randy, by his astonishing maturity, by the strength of his personal values, by his guileless eagerness to learn and to communicate. In a local coffee shop, we talk with Randy about his precocious artistic talent, his goals for the future, and his thoughts about his growing career.

Jenny: Randy, we've been admiring the little newsletter you put out. Tell us about it.

Randy: [Grinning] Don't tease me on my cheeseball publication. The Green Meese Studio newsletter goes to anyone who sends cards to be signed or asks for information or whatever.

Jenny: What is "Green Meese?"

Randy: I don't answer that question anymore.

Jenny: I see.

Randy: The newsletter was an attempt to catch up in terms of recognition. I figured a newsletter would be a great way to keep my name in people's heads. I don't really have the time to be doing it, but I really enjoy doing it for people.



LEFT: RANDY GALLEGOS IN HIS STUDIO IN MONTEREY, CALIF. (PHOTO BY JOHN LEE)

RIGHT: COUNTER-HEGEMONIC FORCE, FROM GOD V. 2.0



People have called me and said really good things about it, so that's enough. Makes me happy. And it's free, too. I don't know about you, but I love getting free stuff in the mail.

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When I was little I would always get on company mailing lists just so I could get mail. I would actually *enjoy* getting bills because it was mail. When **Jyhad** came out, it took about four months to get my first fan letter. I was just thrilled! Whoo! You know? First letter! They rolled in about once a month for a while, and then after *Ice Age*TM came out I was getting four or five a week at one point.

Jenny: You're pretty active on the Internet, aren't you?

Randy: Yes, I am, actually. Margaret Organ-Kean [also a Magic artist] and I are some of the most vocal ones in the Magic community on the Internet. I use it for entertainment pretty much, but you also hear a lot of good gossip on the Net. You hear people talking about their favorite artists, and you hear a lot of people basically blasting artists. I think people don't like what

they don't understand. People have misconceptions about artists and about art, and so Margaret and I retrain them. It kind of eliminates the mystique of the artist because we're so easy to contact, but I let the mystique come out with my art.

Jenny: I remember you saying that you had an unusual college experience. What was that like?

Randy: Well, I spent three years at California College of Arts and Crafts. I spent the first year taking all of these required classes, which really sucked,

basically. They make you take a full year of classes like Ethnic Diversity, to get you aware of other cultures, even though San Jose is the most culturally diverse city in the country. Plus, I'm not white, so I think I have a handle on that.

Then I figured out, "Well, I don't need a degree to do illustration." So I decided to spend the next few years concentrating on all the studio classes, primarily drawing. I put them all together into this really intense course load, and in two years I managed to get all the studio courses that I wanted. The way I got away with it was that every semester I'd go to the counselor with the form listing the classes I was supposed to be taking. He'd look it over, approve it, and then I'd go erase it and write in the classes I really wanted, and since he'd signed it, I got them. In two years I'd gotten everything I wanted out of the college and I was out.

Amy: How did things go after college?

Randy: At the beginning, I was doing work for nothing because I just wanted to be published first. For about the first five or six months after college, I didn't see a penny. I didn't even have a savings account until August. Everything I made I put back into my illustration, upgrading my studio, making portfolios, and so on. I pumped a lot of money into it, but I see it as an investment.

One of my favorite paintings actually is "Seventh," which I did for a small magazine here in Washington called *Zero Gravity Free Fall* that asked me to do a cover for them. They said, "We're really a small magazine, and we can only pay sixty-five dollars." And I said, "It's a cover, it's a magazine, I'll get it printed and put it in my portfolio. I'll do it."



TOP: OLIVIA SALAZAR, FROM NETRUNNER (WIZARDS OF THE COAST)
BOTTOM: MIRUMOTO DAINI, FROM LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGS (ALDERAC ENTERTAINMENT)

Amy: How is being a full-time illustrator? Are you working all the time?

Randy: Well, I think I have the beginnings of being a workaholic, and I don't want to be. Monica will actually hang out in the studio half the time because I have to work all the time. Lately I've been trying to take every Sunday off, and that's been successful. It's really hard, but then I get to read books and do other things. I like reading; I like to hike. I play card games, primarily with my little brother, Robert.

Jenny: How old is your brother?

Randy: Robert is sixteen. And I have an older brother, Rudy. Rudy's twenty-four. So it's three brothers: Rudy, Randy, and Robert. My dad's a Rudy, my middle name is Richard. There are a lot of Rs.

Jenny: Do you know what you want to paint when you sit down to work on a piece, or does it evolve as you paint?

Randy: What I'll do is I'll go over a bunch of scenes in my head with a central idea and play it like a movie. I'll pose the actors and pose the light, and then I'll fly around it like a camera and find the right way I want to light it. Then I'll freeze that and do a final sketch. It becomes the painting.

Amy: Is it true you're color blind?

Randy: Yeah, I'm red-green color blind. Pretty much like a dog. You know, Anson [Maddocks, also a Magic artist] is color blind, too. We were at dinner one time talking about it, and he said, "This is really great green sauce, isn't it?" And I said, "Yeah, it's really good." It was red sauce, apparently.

Amy: Have you ever accidentally painted something the wrong color?

Randy: People don't know it because I make up most of my skin tones and most of my colors, so I can usually get away with it. I had a color class in college, and the teacher was a photorealist. He figured out that I was compensating for my lack of color sense by having





really good value studies. ("Value" is an art term that refers to the interplay of dark and light shapes in a composition.)

Amy: You do use light beautifully in all of your paintings.

Randy: People often mention my lighting. I think I use light as the primary composition tool. I'll actually compose paintings around the light source because light is going to create the color, and light is going to create the dark and light values. Like Infuse [in Ice Age]. That obviously was a piece composed around light. I made those hands blue, they glowed, and they glowed a really cold color, and it made the rest of the painting. Vexing Arcanix is another. The main idea of that piece is the light.

Amy: "My Wish for Monica" is a moody piece.

Randy: It was a pure emotional piece. My best pieces have been ones that really come from an emotional mood, and that one was even more emotional than usual because there was a lot of symbolism in that painting. It was about religion, basically. Not in a preachy way, but there were a lot of religious overtones in it.

Jenny: Where did you get your inspiration for Dance of the Dead?

Randy: For Dance of the Dead, I knew I wanted to have some kind of movement. I didn't know what, but I wanted to find something that would give regular motion. And then I thought of a Chinese fan. So the composition of Dance of the Dead is based on a Chinese fan. If you look at the figures from top to the right they spread open, and all of the weapons they have, they all spread out like this fan.

Amy: We ask this of most of the artists: What would be your dream project?

INSET: SKETCHES AND ROUGHS FOR DANCE OF THE DEAD

BOTTOM: DANCE OF THE DEAD; MAGIC: THE GATHERING-ICE AGETM (WIZARDS OF THE COAST)



Randy: Gosh, that's pretty hard. Well, one of my great aspirations is to get into book covers because most of the artists I've really admired have been book artists, and I love science-fiction and fantasy novels. So a dream project might be redoing covers of a series I really enjoy. But books in general. I've wanted to be a fantasy illustrator since I was eleven or twelve.

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Amy: Why do you create art?

Randy: Good question. I've questioned myself about this a lot, and I feel that what I've been given is a gift. I feel that it's a blessing and that I should use it to its fullest extent to do something positive, whether it's just to entertain people or something more. If it's an emotional piece, I want to affect people in some way or other.

For that reason, I work really hard on everything I do and try to do as good a job as I possibly can. It results in my doing a painting for sixty-five dollars that takes two weeks and things like that. But it's a matter of having a responsibility to myself to go out of my way for the publisher and for everyone because they're going to buy these things and they're going to enjoy them.

So all those things together drive the work. I also really enjoy communicating someone else's ideas. I like being challenged through restraints, like, "You get seven inches by nine inches and a title." That's challenging to me! That's why Magic is just a fantastic project to work with. The *Duelist* pieces are really pretty open-ended too. That demon [the center poster in this issue] is going to be a great piece because it has real emotional strength to it.

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Jenny: Let's talk about demons for a second. What would you say to people who say that fantasy art is satanic or evil?

Randy: This is a real serious thing because I'm Christian and I'm a fantasy artist. I think when parents start saying that kids are in "this Magic cult," I think to myself it's almost a good thing because if parents are worrying about that, that's pretty good. I mean, there are so many real evils and real bad

things in the world that for somebody to be worrying about something as silly as that means things are pretty good.

You know, I read in the interview with Mark Tedin [in Duelist #6] about what he said about how people who have watched Star Wars don't go around professing to use the dark side of the Force. And it's true. Art doesn't affect people like that. Partially because I don't think painting's the most effective form. I think the most effective forms of communication are film and music. They are the two that have most potential of exploiting the emotional, and they subject you to their emotions for a long period of time. Because of that, those two art forms have been influential. Yes. certain people have committed suicide because of music. People do cry at movies. People don't cry at paintings. A painting affects you for a few minutes. It doesn't

hold you. And you look at it for enjoyment, usually.

Amy: So what would you say to a mother who writes in about your poster?

Randy: Well, what I've always said to people is this: If paintings and so-called evil images could corrupt you, if looking at inappropriate or questionable things could corrupt you, if that were the case I'd be a truly evil person or a Satanist by now, creating all this imagery. Because, I mean, I

did a painting of a woman kissing a corpse [the card Redeem the Lost Soul, in the next *Vampire: The Eternal Struggle* expansion, *Ancient Hearts*].

But why is it that every time I do a painting like this it strengthens me as a Christian? Why is that? It's because I see my ability to paint as a blessing. I see my work as an extension of that blessing, and so each time I do one it strengthens my own faith. There have always been

TOP: LARVA, FROM GOD V.2.0

very religious painters who painted scenes of hell and evil. Look at paintings of the Last Judgment. Is a painter like Bosch bad because he painted a bunch of devils into a painting? No. Also, I do work that is really religious-oriented as well. I do both sides of the coin.

Amy: So which artists do you like? Which artists are you influenced by?

Randy: I really enjoy a lot of the Victorian painters, like Albert Moore, Lord Leighton, John Williams Waterhouse. However, even though I'm a fan of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, the most brilliant painter that ever lived, I think I prefer Waterhouse because of the emotional content. His focus was the emotional content, whereas Alma-Tadema is a little more decorative. I also like Gustave Dore, who did primarily blackand-white printmaking, etchings.

I've always really enjoyed Michael Whelan. I was really influenced by him because he was doing the work that I really wanted to do, which was books, and because a lot of work has, I think, real strong emotional content. As a kid, I would go to the bookstores every month because I knew he'd have a new cover out. I would go and prepare for my stomach drop every time. His things just really got me. And I thought, "I want to do that to someone else. I would like someone else to tell me, 'Geez, I felt something in here [patting





stomach] when I saw your painting.' That would be amazing.

Amy: Who's your favorite Magic artist?

Randy: I really enjoy Quinton [Hoover], and I really enjoy Richard Kane Ferguson. I feel that they're both doing something that's theirs, no one else's. They're both really brilliant. I love Rob Alexander. I told him the first time I met him that I felt he was someone I would have to worry about for a long time to come. He does some of the neatest things a little differently than I do, so luckily there's not a total comparison. I really enjoy his work a lot.

Jenny: What advice would you give to young—well, you are a young artist—but what advice would you give to even younger artists?

Randy: I think the main thing my instructor-mentor Vince Perez always said to me was, "You're not the best talent that I've ever met, but you have an incredible work ethic. And in the end, that's going to beat the person with 'natural talent.'" Any person with natural talent is going to be better in the tenth grade, and in the eleventh grade. But eventually, if they're not really hard workers, it will catch up to them. My main advice would be just to work as hard as you possibly can and as long as you possibly can. And don't worry about comparing yourself. There are too

many brilliant artists out there. There is always going to be someone who's better than you. For me it's just a matter of doing as well as I possibly can, achieving my goals as fast as I possibly can.

Amy: What are some of your goals?

Randy: Well, eventually I thought someday I would like to work for Magic. Someday a *Duelist* cover would be nice. I told Monica, "Wouldn't that be

really cool if someday I could do a *Duelist* cover?" I thought it would be a couple of years because I thought the recognition factor would take me a long time. But I guess I made it faster.

Jenny: Is it exciting to think there might be some twelve-year-old kid somewhere running to the store to get their Magic cards and having their stomach drop when they see your work?

Randy: [Laughs] I don't think that's happening yet. But if it is, I want them to contact me!

Amy: Send him email!

If you'd like to contact Randy Gallegos or receive a copy of his newsletter, Green Meese Studio, write to him at:
5667 Snell Ave. #214
San Jose, CA 95123
or email him at plumage@hooked.net

In the next issue, The Duelist interviews artist Scott Kirschner, whose work has appeared in **Magic** and **EVERWAY**TM. If you have questions for Scott, please send them to duelist@wizards.com. We'll try to include as many of them as we can.

Amy Weber is art director for The Duelist. Jenny Scott is an editor for Wizards of the Coast and a freelance writer.

TOP: WAKE WITH EVENING'S FRESHNESS, FROM VAMPIRE: THE ETERNAL STRUGGLE (WIZARDS OF THE COAST)

BOTTOM: GLORFINDEL II, FROM MIDDLE-EARTH: THE WIZARDS TM (IRON CROWN ENTERPRISES)

DIVIDED IN DALLAS

by Jeff J. Lin

DALLAS, Texas—This is a city that has been known for a lot of different things: football's Dallas Cowboys (and Cowgirls), television shows, and famous people with initials, like J.R. and JFK. And though it might not be apparent, it's also an area with an active **Magic** scene and a growing pool of talented players who come from all over this corner of Texas.

Dallas doesn't come close to duplicating the **Magic** player base of, say, a city like Los Angeles. What it does have, though, is a fairly tight-knit community of players and a decent number of stores where various formats of **Magic** are played regularly.

"[The **Magic** scene] is not huge," admits George Baxter, a Dallas player and resident. Baxter is the author of two published

books on **Magic** strategy, *Mastering* **Magic** Cards and *Deep* **Magic**, both from Wordware Publishing.

According to Baxter, the Dallas **Magic** scene is the split of Type I players and Type II players into two separate camps. There seems to be little interaction between the two, except at the monthly "Supertournament," the biggest regular event in Dallas, which draws players from all over the state.

Both Type I and Type II scenes revolve around weekly tournaments on Saturdays; Type I players gather at

Games Galore in Arlington, while the Type II players head for Game Chest in the Valley View Mall in Dallas.

On this particular Saturday, two weeks before Christmas, thirty-nine people have shown up for the Swiss-style tournament in the back room at Game Chest. Baxter, a former employee of the store, still runs the tournament, even though he's gotten another job as marketing director for Wordware Publishing.

The champion for the last two weeks has been Jason Lee, a student at the nearby University of North Texas. His deck, a fast black Rack/"hand-destruction" deck (one that forces the

opponent to discard), with Sengir Vampires and Knights of Stromgald, is well on its way to winning Lee his third Mox in as many weeks. "Until last week, nobody's ever won back-to-back tournaments here," Baxter says.

According to Baxter, no one deck type dominates play, though discard decks have been one of the decks of choice in Dallas Type II play lately. "Right now, hand destruction is all the rage," he says. Also popular are blue/white control decks, Black Vise decks, Blinking Spirit decks, and Nevinyrral's Disk decks.

Tom Lang, a fifty-two-year-old database administrator for S&A Restaurants, is one of a small handful of players that play

with both the Type I and Type II camps. Lang travels often on business and always tries to play **Magic** in the different cities he visits. "A lot of other places I go to, they're doing things we were doing six months ago," Lang says. "Of course, I don't know if that's true everywhere," he adds. "But I am kind of surprised that there are so many good players here."

What really makes the Dallas

Magic scene special, though, is
the sense of community, says

Kelly Hogan, wife of Type I

National Champion and Dallasarea resident Chip Hogan and a
player herself. "It's like a big family,"

she says. "Everywhere we go, it's like 'Oh, how's Storm [the Hogans' ten-month-old daughter]? Look at how's she's grown!'—stuff like that. It's unlike anything we've ever come across when we travel."

Of all the Dallas players, Hogan (see profile, p. 86) is perhaps the best known. He certainly travels the most, regularly playing in big tournaments all across the country. Hogan thinks Dallas is one of the best places for Type I play. "I think it's only fitting that the Type I National Champion should be from Dallas," he said after winning the Championship in October.



THE MONTHLY SUPERTOURNAMENT DRAWS MAGIC PLAYERS FROM ALL OVER THE DALLAS AREA AND BEYOND.

Unlike in some other areas of the country, Type I play is still very much alive in the Dallas area. According to Hogan, most of the decks are blue/white control decks. "Dallas is control central," he says. Other Type I deck strategies popular in the area are decks using "twelve bolts" (Lightning Bolts, Incinerates, etc.), "twelve knights" (Knights of Stromgald, Order of the Ebon Hand, etc.), or land destruction.

Being a hardcore **Magic** player in Dallas, or anywhere in Texas for that matter, is fairly difficult, if only because of the distances people have to cover to get to tournaments and stores. Many of the bigger **Magic** stores with large play areas and tournaments are scattered about the larger Dallas area. For instance, one of the nicest stores in the area, the Texas Game Co., is located in Allen, twenty-five miles outside the city. This correspondent put over 350 miles on his car in four days just visiting most of the bigger stores in the area.

It's even tougher if you're a Duelists' Convocation member trying to keep your ratings up. Because of the lack of DC-sanctioned events in the area, Baxter says he's had to drive to Oklahoma to play in sanctioned tournaments.

In fact, many of the players who are active in the Dallas

scene don't live in Dallas; they come from surrounding areas, like Abilene (a three-hour drive from Dallas), Denton (one hour from Dallas), or College Station (two and a half hours from Dallas). Players often need to be resourceful to find places to play in their own areas, especially in the evenings.

In Denton, for instance, it's been difficult to find places to play at night, ever since the management at a local pizza parlor kicked out



DALLAS FEATURES PLAYERS OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS.

the Magic players and banned the game from its premises.

With nowhere to go, some of Hogan's friends rented a space at the local Space Plus Self-Storage and furnished the ten-foot-by-ten-foot "room" with carpeting, a large table, a couch, shelves stacked full of card folders and books, lights, and a small space heater. The storage space is a regular place for players in Denton to hang out, trade, and play. "Half of Denton knows the [entry] code to this place," says Hogan.

When we visit, around midnight on a Wednesday, the two "proprietors" of the space, A.J. and Tim, are there playing away; they often don't leave until 4 or 5 A.M. According to Hogan, this is where he and many Denton players trained for last year's South Central regionals. "We would come here and literally play all night," Hogan says.

Of course, as in any community, there are always small feuds going on between members, and the Dallas **Magic** community is no different. The current tiff, between Baxter and Hogan, is Baxter's contention that after a certain level, Type I play all boils down to whoever-goes-first-wins. Hogan disagrees, saying going first only makes a five-to-ten-percent difference and is just one of a number of factors.

As of press time, the two have yet to actually duel it out. But neither player harbors any personal animosity toward the other. Hogan, in fact, is helping Baxter put together a deck for the Type I section of Baxter's next book about **Magic**, due out in February. For his part, Baxter likens the differences between the Type I and Type II players to differences between religious groups. "They just have different trains of thought," he says, adding: "The neat part about it all is that we're all friends."

Jeff J. Lin is a senior editor for The Duelist.

WHERE TO PLAY

Finding a good place to play **Magic** in Dallas and the surrounding areas may require a bit of driving. Here are some places that have regular tournaments and/or leagues:

Fantastic Realm 1706 N. Elm, Denton, TX 76201, (817) 381-0416

Fantastic Voyage 1311 Plaza Drive, Suite 150, Garland, TX 75041, (214) 613-9757

Fantasy Comics 2000 W. Parker, #110, Plano, TX 75075, (214) 867-6640

Game Chest 2242 Valley View Center, Valley View Mall, Dallas, TX 75240, (214) 490-7814

Games Galore 805 W. Park Row Drive, Arlington, TX 76013, (817) 461-GAME

Games Plus 13531 Montford Drive, #103, Dallas, TX 75240, (214) 702-9350

Games Unique 5301 Beltline Road, Suite 2016 in Prestonwood Mall, Dallas, TX 75240, (214) 385-2464

Generation X Comics 239 N. Industrial, Bedford, TX 76021, (817) 540-5556

Keith's Books and Comics 5736 E. Mockingbird, Dallas, TX 75206, (214) 827-3060

Lone Star Comics 11661 Preston Road, Dallas, TX 75230, (214) 373-0934

Texas Game Co. 803 E. Main, Allen, TX 75002, (800) 390-9467

Also, the **Supertournament** is held monthly. Call (214) 558-1701 for information.

Spotlight on: CHIP OGAN

"When I was younger I tried not to be an ordinary person, and when I got older and decided I didn't need to try anymore, it was too late—I was already different."

—Chip Hogan,
1995 Type I National

Champion

Kelly Hogan was explaining to a writer from a game magazine why it was that her husband couldn't come to the phone. He had gone to Abilene, Texas-three hours away from their home in Denton, Texas-to work on deck-construction ideas, she said, and wouldn't be back for five days. When the writer calls again a month later, he still isn't there-he's now in Birmingham, Alabama, she says, playing Magic, en route to a tournament in New York City. Can she take a message?

Meet Chip Hogan, professional **Magic** player.

Hogan, twenty, is perhaps
best known in the **Magic** world
for winning several big tournaments, including the 1995
Type I National Championship, *Conjure* magazine's
Sorcerer's Open at Origins, and
one of the *Homelands*TM premiere tournaments in October. He is less
well-known, however, for being one of a
very few people who makes his living
playing **Magic**.

The title "professional Magic player" might sound more glamorous than it is. Money is never a luxury, and the financial uncertainty can put a strain on things, especially if you have a young family. Kelly works as a waitress to help with finances, and the couple has a



'ALL I DO IS THINK ABOUT MAGIC,' SAYS HOGAN, THE CURRENT TYPE I NATIONAL CHAMPION. 'I JUST LET MY MIND WANDER FROM SUBJECT TO SUBJECT.'

daughter, Storm, almost a year old. "The biggest problem comes from natural anxiety about cash flow," says Hogan. "[Kelly's] being able to trust my judgment is sometimes difficult, because there's no clear way to make good money in this game."

For Hogan, the recent announcement of a number of Wizards of the Coast-backed big-money **Magic** tournaments in 1996 has been good news indeed.

His sights are now set on the \$30,000

Black Lotus Professional Magic Tournament in mid-February in New York City. This is what prompted Hogan's week-long sojourn in Abilene. Since Hogan considers himself a Type I player, and the Pro Tournament is a Type II event, he went "to learn how to play Type II" because "Some of the best Type II players in the world are in Abilene," he says.

Travel—lots of it—is a regular part of the Hogans' lives. They log an average of three thousand miles a month on their old Honda Accord, driving (and sometimes flying) to about two large tournaments every month, often out of state. The journeys are sometimes hazardous: the driver's side of their car is dented and scarred from when they were run off the road by a tractor-trailer truck while driving back from a tournament in New York last October.

Traveling isn't the only thing Hogan has had to do to play **Magic** for a living. Because of the small number

of big-prize tournaments and the fact that most prizes aren't cash but **Magic** cards, being a professional player means having to buy and sell cards as well.

But wheeling and dealing is nothing new to Hogan. "Sales is in my blood," he says. His paternal grandfather was a traveling salesman for Birds Eye, "pioneering the frozen food market," and both parents have been involved in sales-oriented careers their whole lives. Hogan himself took to selling early, cutting out coupons from the newspaper at age three (he swears he's not exaggerating) and hawking them door-to-door to his neighbors in Houston. "I made a ton of money, especially for a three-year-old."

"Making money at the last moment has never been a problem," he says. Right after Storm was born last April, Hogan managed to sell \$2,500 worth of grab bags to take care of the bills. "I put Moxes, Timetwisters, Guardian Beasts, Old Man of the Seas, lots of stuff in them," he says. "For \$5 a grab bag, I think they were the most popular grab bags ever."

Hogan's sharp entrepreneurial eye has landed him a small endorsement deal with a local shop, Games Galore, which now advertises itself as "Home of the Type I National Champion." In addition, he's always coming up with ideas—seminars, books, other endorsements—to help leverage his accomplishments into something that can potentially pay the rent.

Hogan has never been one to tread the beaten path. Kelly's first pregnancy and disagreements with the university's

policies resulted in Hogan, at age seventeen, leaving a special early-entrance program at the University of North Texas (where he met Kelly) after his first year. A stint running a window-blind business in Champaign, Illinois, was short-lived, and the two moved back to Denton to return to school. Hogan found the university's classes boring, however, and quit again after a year.

Hogan's rail-thin frame belies the tremendous amount of energy and intensity he has. To spend any amount of time with Hogan is to listen to him talk, usually about Magic: strategies, cards, art, tournament formats, sanctioning policies, whatever—Hogan has lots of ideas and opinions, almost all soundly reasoned and thought out. "All I do is think about Magic," he says, and you're not sure if he's exaggerating. "I just let my mind wander from subject to subject."

Hogan was introduced to **Magic** in the fall of 1994 and quickly got into it.

"I started becoming the **Magic** authority in Denton, which is not a big claim to fame, but it gave me a little incentive to try and be bigger," he says. "Then I read about Zak Dolan being the World Champion and all this stuff, and I decided that's what I wanted to do."

He made the decision to "turn pro" last year after victories at Origins and at a big tournament in Birmingham, Alabama, several weeks later. Though he's racked up an impressive number of titles, several key mistakes kept him from qualifying for the U.S. Nationals last year, which still haunts him today. "I still consider it my greatest loss that I did not qualify, to even at least get in...to know



THE FAMILY THAT PLAYS TOGETHER, STAYS TOGETHER: HOGAN WITH WIFE KELLY (ALSO A PLAYER) AND DAUGHTER STORM.

whether or not I would've done well," he says. "I kick myself often for not doing better there."

Hogan is a quick thinker with a very sharp mind and a fierce competitiveness. "His analytical ability is very, very good," says Tom Lang, a friend and Dallas tournament regular. "I've seen people try to copy his deck, but [they] were unable to make it work because they don't understand what makes it work. His decks are complex and very well integrated."

Hogan's signature Type I deck has been something he's been working on for a very long time. The deck, a controltheme deck that eventually locks opponents down and delivers damage with Ernham Djinns, Mishra's Factories, and Fireballs, has a lot of quirks that work to Hogan's advantage, especially if opponents haven't seen it before.

"Outside of Dallas my deck wins not just on its merits or on my playing skill,

but on the fact that people don't know what to do [against it]," he says.

When playing, Hogan also makes use of a few other strategies. "I make a conscious effort at subtle intimidation," he says. "Having a black-bordered deck is really the most intimidating thing for a player. Having signed cards in a deck is also good because it shows that you're really the real thing, that **Magic** is nothing short of the four necessary requirements for getting through a day. Only the most fanatical—and 'fanatical' is still a weak word for it—black-border their decks.

"In chess, distraction is a must-have skill for a world-class player. Knowing

how to distract your opponent without breaking the rules or being a real asshole about it [is important]. I definitely apply that to **Magic**," he adds.

Hogan is expected to be a contender on the pro circuit, and his hopes for this year are high. "Between WotC and WarCon and random tournaments for \$1,000–\$2,000, I should be able to make a good living playing **Magic**," he said. "My goal for 1996 is to make around \$30,000–\$35,000."

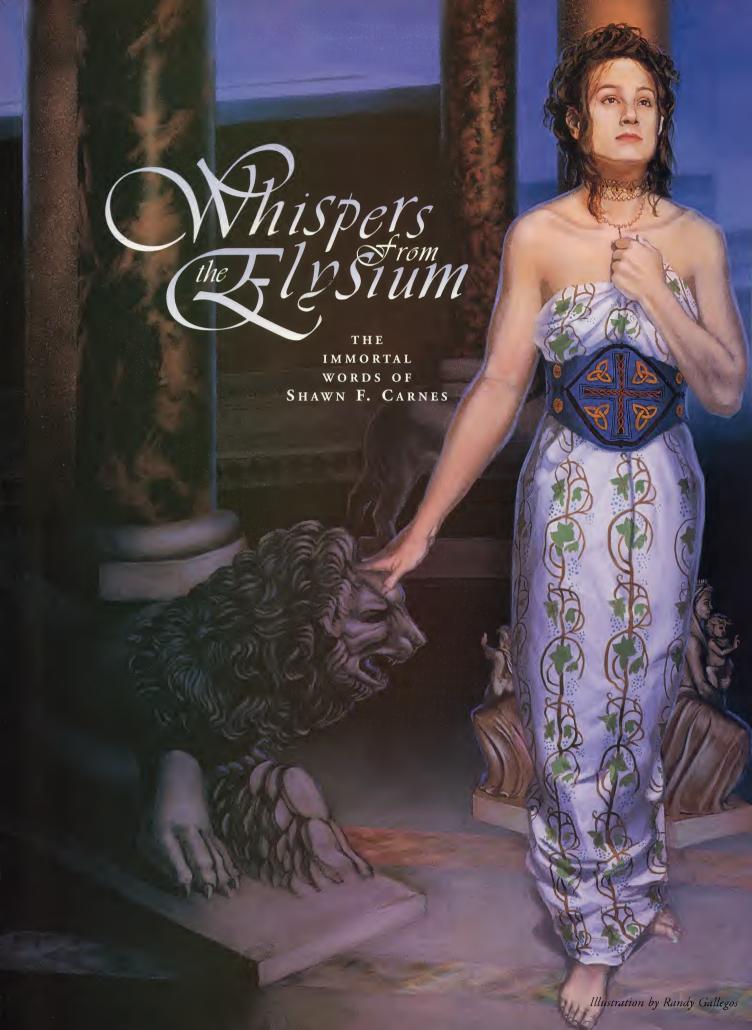
But Hogan also realizes a career as a **Magic** player is potentially short-lived. "I've had

serious discussions with myself [as to] why I'm staying in **Magic**, trying to be a professional player, when there's nothing really established."

"The big [question] is: Am I making the right decision [now] for 1998? If I'm going to school, barely scraping by on student loans, making six dollars an hour, and then I get a degree and go do something, am I going to be making more money [in '98] going that route; am I going to be happier? Or am I better off going this route? That's a tough question."

Hogan's friends have every confidence in him, though. "Chip's pretty unusual," says Lang. "When you meet him, you know he's going to make a name for himself in whatever he decides to do."

—Jeff J. Lin



Welcome to "Whispers from the Elysium," a new feature dedicated to

keeping a finger on the pulse (or lack thereof) of Vampire: The Eternal Struggle™.

In each installment, Shawn Carnes (one of the designers of Dark Sovereigns™) will

discuss the issues that V:TES players are talking about and delve into secrets

that even the Antediluvians haven't heard of.



DARK SOVEREIGNS JOINS THE STRUGGLE!

very V:TES player worth her weight in vitae knows that the ✓long-awaited expansion for V:TES, Dark Sovereigns, has finally been released. The set's 173 actionpacked cards introduce some new elements into the game that will make any Methuselah's fangs glisten. Highlights of the set include the Giovanni and the Ravnos, two powerful European clans that are not part of the Camarilla. These vampires are excluded from certain privileges afforded only to Camarilla vampires, such as titles above primogen and certain political actions; however, they compensate for this exclusion with abilities in two new Disciplines, Necromancy and Chimerstry. The set also introduces the ultrapowerful Inner Circle vampires, the seven representatives of the clans that govern the Camarilla. These 11-capacity vampires have a ton of Disciplines, and all of them can bleed at +2-a minimum of 3 pool per attack! Take it from me, that's a mouthful!

Is THE INNER CIRCLE Too Powerful?

There has been a lot of discussion on the Internet, especially on the vtes-1 list, about whether or not these Inner Circle vampires are simply too powerful. There are two ways to look at the issue. On the one hand, consider the thematics of the game: the Inner Circle vampires represent the most powerful vampires within the Camarilla, with entire clans at their beck and call. Certainly they are going to exert tremendous power, much more so than vampires of similar capacity but less political importance could. The Eternal Struggle is definitely not a "fair" environment, and its leaders are the least fair of the whole lot. On the other

QUESTION:
WHICH CARD ON THE DARK
SOVEREIGNS SPOILER LISTS CAN'T
YOU FIND IN THE SET?

A II S W E R :
The fabled-yet-real Vial
of Methuselah Vitae card. This
card was designed to be
released in Dark Sovereigns,
but a snafu prevented its entry
into the set. I'd tell you what
the card does, but then it
wouldn't be a surprise when
you see it in a future expansion
for V:TES,
would it?

hand, these are the most expensive vampires in the game, definitely in the "thisvampire-is-almost-impossible-to-getout!" category. Players will think twice before investing over a third of their initial pool into a single vampire, particularly since there is a big difference between bringing out a powerful vampire and keeping it in play. On the whole, I've found that the Inner Circle vampires are potent but not gamebreaking, and the flavor they bring to the game is certainly worth the added challenges they pose to players.

V:TES TOURNAMENT RULES ARE HERE!

he long-awaited Duelists'
Convocation V:TES tournament rules are out, and in my opinion they look pretty sharp. The release of the rules should get V:TES play going to a near frenzy level! You can find the rules on page 75 of this issue of *The Duelist*, and you can also contact Customer Service at Wizards of the Coast to obtain the most up-to-date copy.

I know some of the hobby stores in the Seattle area are already holding **V:TES** tournaments, enough to keep even the most avid Methuselahs bleeding to their hearts' content. Rumor has it that Wizards of the Coast has some large-scale **V:TES** tournaments in the works—stay tuned to this column for more information on these!



THE CARD BACK DEBATE: AS UNDYING AS THE KINDRED

ince Wizards of the Coast announced the name change from Jyhad™ to Vampire: The Eternal Struggle, the debate over how the different card backs would affect the game has graced every V:TES players' eyes, ears, and screens at one point or another. With the release of Dark Sovereigns and the DC **V:TES** tournament rules, discussion on this topic has resurfaced. Let me offer some suggestions on how to cope with two of these rules in particular. If the DC rule requiring your library to contain a minimum of sixty percent V:TES cards has you in torpor, don't forget that this is an optional rule. Other optional rules can be implemented: you can always draw from the bottom of the deck, or you and your fellow Methuselahs can show each other your decks before play. And of course for non-tournament play you can ignore the 60/40 rule and develop your own house rules.

The DC rule about single-back crypts also has many players in an uproar. I know that this rule may seem restrictive, but putting together twelve cards from the same set isn't that hard (vampires are roughly as easy to get as uncommon cards). For players who've invested in **Jyhad** but feel they have to play with a **V:TES** crypt, there are many ways to get **V:TES** cards if you don't want to buy any. I'm sure that before you know it, concern over this rule will be minimal.

SHARE YOUR NEWS ON V: TES LEAGUES

bout two months ago, I discovered that a hobby store in the Seattle area had set up a V:TES league. Though I haven't had a chance to participate in it yet (keeping track of the Eternal Struggle can be quite time consuming!), I'm looking forward to it. Have any of you Methuselahs ever taken part in a V:TES league? If you have, write me and tell me about it. The first letter that crosses my desk

with some good information to share will receive an Enzo Giovanni card autographed by the artist, Mark Tedin, as well as by myself. So get those tournaments and leagues going, and keep an eye out for some vein-popping events in 1996!

WHAT'S NEXT FOR V: TES?

can't go into too much detail about the release schedule for 1996, but I can give you some idea of what's in store for the **V:TES** fanatic. Another

Want some hints ABOUT V: TES RELEASES FOR 1996?

CHECK THE BACK PAGE OF A RULEBOOK FROM A V:TES STARTER AND LOOK FOR THE GAME SYMBOLS THAT DON'T APPEAR ON ANY EXISTING CARDS. AND THINK ABOUT THE TWO OTHER MAJOR, NON-CAMARILLA VAMPIRE CLANS THAT HAVEN'T YET BEEN TOUCHED UPON IN V:TES...

expansion for **V:TES**, *Ancient Hearts*, is planned for a release in the first quarter of 1996, and it promises to be another exciting one. This expansion takes you to ancient Egypt, where two powerful clans, the Assamites and the Followers of Set, hold sway.

Later in the year, we plan to release what we're currently calling the Vampire poker deck, a deck of 54 non-collectable playing cards depicting the clans of the Camarilla in stunning, full-color artwork. Plans are to include the rules for some new Richard Garfield games that can be played with the deck!

Finally, we hope 1996 will see a muchrequested addition to the world of Vampire: The Eternal Struggle, The Sabbat. This stand-alone expansion focus-



es on the clans which form The Sabbat, the harsh and potent sect of vampires who are the antithesis of the Camarilla. Unlike previous stand-alone expansions, this set will only be around for a brief time, so keep your eye out for it!

CONTACT THE ELYSIUM

want to hear from you! Whether it is a letter about the league information I previously mentioned, or just a note that says I'm your next target in the Eternal Struggle, send your correspondence to:

"Whispers from the Elysium" c/o *The Duelist* P. O. Box 707 Renton, WA 98057

I will respond to as much mail as I get, and if there is room in future issues, I will print the letters that everyone should take a look at. Also, I am a lurker on the vtes-1 list, so I can get letters and comments that way as well.

Until we meet again, keep your feet on the ground and keep reaching for your prey.

Shawn Carnes can't help but be biased about the release of Dark Sovereigns; not only is he one of the designers of the expansion, he's also one of the vampires in the set can you guess which one?



V:TESPUL Compiled by Tom Wylie Compiled by T

GENERAL RULINGS

1) Q: Are Caitiff considered Camarilla vampires?

A: Yes, though the Caitiff are not a clan.

2) Q: Can I use damage-prevention cards to prevent damage from Pulled Fangs or Rutor's Hand?

A: Normally you cannot, since damageprevention cards can only be played during a Check Damage step of combat. However, damage prevention that has already been provided by a card (such as the lasting effect of Flesh of Marble) can be applied.

Also, cards that specifically allow you to prevent their damage at unusual times, such as Rutor's Hand, treat damage as having been dealt during strike resolution, when the full range of damage-prevention effects can be used.

3) Q: If a vampire uses Mask of a Thousand Faces to take over an action, which action modifiers will "carry over" to this new vampire?

A: Essentially, the Mask changes which vampire is currently considered the acting minion; therefore, any modifiers that applied to the acting minion will now apply to the new vampire. Standard modifiers such as Lost in Crowds or Bonding should be assumed to apply to the acting minion and so carry over.

Modifiers that are inherent to or that apply specifically to the original minion, such as Laptop Computer, will not carry over to the new vampire; conversely, if the new acting minion has such a modifier, that modifier now applies. Effects that apply to the acting minion but don't affect a generic acting minion (such as Backways used on an acting Gangrel) do not affect the new vampire.

4) Q: Can a non-Camarilla vampire become a Prince?

A: No. Non-Camarilla vampires cannot be Princes, although they can become Primogen members. If a non-Camarilla Vampire begins with votes and later gains a title, she loses the votes she started with, just as if the Vampire had lost a title.

5) Q: Can non-Camarilla vampires play any political action they want?

A: Not quite. Non-Camarilla vampires cannot play political actions that depend upon membership in the Camarilla and the abilities this confers. Thus, these vampires cannot call a Praxis Seizure. They cannot call Justicar Retribution or Command of the Harpies, or call a vote to burn Elysium: The Arboretum. Also, non-Camarilla vampires cannot be chosen as Archon or Camarilla Exemplaries, although they are still affected by a vampire who is an Archon or Exemplary.

SPECIFIC CARD RULINGS AND ERRATA

6) Q: Can I play Brujah Frenzy if the only minions controlled by the other players are vampires in torpor?

A: No. Brujah Frenzy should read "choose a ready untapped minion." If the only untapped minions available are vampires in torpor, Brujah Frenzy cannot be played.

7) Q: If I play Brujah Frenzy, can I choose as the victim a vampire the Brujah couldn't legally enter combat with?

A: Yes, as long as the victim you choose is ready and untapped. For example, if a Brujah is attempting to leave torpor, you can stop that action with Brujah Frenzy, even though vampires in torpor can't enter combat.

8) Q: Can I play Major Boon if we're not sure yet whether the bleed will be successful?

A: No. Major Boon is played only after it's clear that the bleed is successful. It then allows players to start changing the amount of the bleed again, such as with Bonding and Telepathic Counter. However, effects that change who is being

bled, such as Deflection, may not be played at this point.

9) Q: Will Scorn of Adonis affect a player who has already cast votes against the acting player?

A: Yes, and it also affects any player casting contrary votes after the Scorn is played. It will not affect the same player twice.

10) Q: If I wind up burning enough pool from a vote like Domain Challenge to drain my pool, can I play Voter Captivation in time to save myself from being ousted?

A: No. Voter Captivation is played after the results of the vote are assessed.

REVERSALS

11) Q: Can Mask of a Thousand Faces take over a specialized action like Thadius Zho's?

A: No. While the Mask can be used to take over a more-or-less generic action (such as an action requiring Thaumaturgy), it cannot be used to take over an action possessed by a specific minion, such as Angus or Thadius.

ERRATA TO V:TES RULEBOOK

There are three changes to the **V:TES** rulebook that were not listed in the original rulebook errata. (See "**V:TES** Rulings and Errata" in *Duelist* #8 for this list.) Note that only the second change to the rulebook is a change to the rules; the other two are basically clarifications.

Section 6.3.2, Rules of Thumb for Blocking

Rule of Thumb #1 implies that if an action is blocked, the costs for any action modifiers used during the action are not paid. This is not correct; only the cost of the action card is waived, as mentioned earlier in the section.

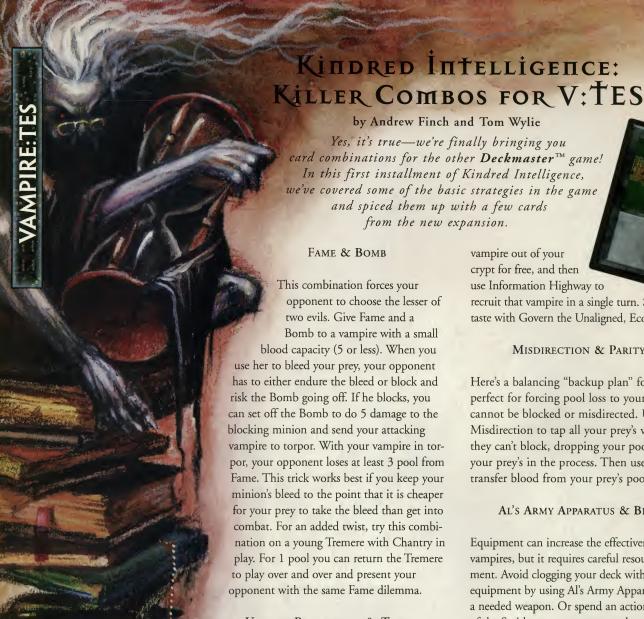
Section 7, Tallying the Votes

A Methuselah taking a political action gains a free vote only if a political action card was played. For example, taking a political action to try to burn the Anarch Revolt would not give you a free vote.

Section 19, Leave Torpor

Any minion may block a "leave torpor" action, including allies, but only vampires may commit diablerie as a result.

DUELIST



UNDEAD PERSISTENCE & TRAP

This is a great combination for any Fortitudebased combat deck. Trap keeps combat going with automatic presses while Undead Persistence keeps your vampire in the combat until it ends, even after the vampire should have gone to torpor.

ZIP GUN & DRAGON'S BREATH ROUNDS

Put more zip in your Zip Gun by loading it with Dragon's Breath Rounds, which allows your minion to do +2 aggravated damage with the gun. This nasty surprise is good and dangerous in any deck.

EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT & INFORMATION HIGHWAY

Put those Tom Peters seminars to good use. Use Effective Management to pull that 6-capacity

recruit that vampire in a single turn. Season to taste with Govern the Unaligned, Ecoterrorists, etc.

MISDIRECTION & PARITY SHIFT

Here's a balancing "backup plan" for voting decks, perfect for forcing pool loss to your prey that cannot be blocked or misdirected. Use Misdirection to tap all your prey's vampires so they can't block, dropping your pool total below your prey's in the process. Then use Parity Shift to transfer blood from your prey's pool to yours.

AL'S ARMY APPARATUS & BLACK CAT

Equipment can increase the effectiveness of your vampires, but it requires careful resource management. Avoid clogging your deck with too much equipment by using Al's Army Apparatus to retrieve a needed weapon. Or spend an action and use Magic of the Smith to get a weapon and equip a vampire at +1 stealth. Combine these with a vampire like Black Cat, who reduces the cost to equip her by 1. Or try Heidelburg Castle or Ravnos Cache, which allow you to transfer equipment between minions.

MUDDLED VAMPIRE HUNTER & IVORY BOW

Enhance the Hunter's First Strike with a weapon that does aggravated damage at range. Plus, the Hunter may enter combat with any ready vampire (just the thing to add a little fear to a Malkavian deck).

MINION TAP & FIFTH TRADITION: HOSPITALITY

Minion Tap is a great way to get a return of the pool you invested in putting the vampire into play. Bleed your vampire almost dry with Minion Tap, then refill it with the Fifth Tradition: Hospitality or Giant's Blood. Note that this tactic will only work if you have a Prince or Justicar for the former and only once a game for the latter.

Middle-earth: The Wizards

Reviewed by Rick Swan



Iron Crown Enterprises, Inc. Charlottesville, VA

Format: 484-card set; 76-card starter deck, \$9.95; 15-card booster pack, \$2.95. For one to five players (best with two); playing time 15–45 minutes for basic game, 1–4 hours for advanced game.

Design: Coleman Charlton with John W. Curtis III,
Pete Fenlon, Jason Hawkins, and Mike Reynolds.
Art Direction: Jessica Ney-Grimm with Jason Hawkins.
Artists: Rob Alexander, Eric David Anderson, Randy
Asplund-Faith, Stefano Baldo, Edward Beard, Jr.,
Melissa Benson, N. Taylor Blanchard,

Asplund-Faith, Stefano Baldo, Edward Beard, Jr.,
Melissa Benson, N. Taylor Blanchard,
Derek Carbonneau, Douglas Chaffee, Ronald Chironna,
Storn Cook, Audrey Corman, Liz Danforth,
David Deitrick, Lori Deitrick, Tom Dow, Darryl Elliot,
Kaja Foglio, Ron Forcella, Mark Forrer, Daniel Frazier,
Randy Gallegos, Daniel Gelon, Donato Giancola,
Jo Hartwig, Quinton Hoover, Heather Hudson, J.
Wallace Jones, April Lee, Luboy, David Martin,
Angus McBride, Gail McIntosh, Ken Meyer, Jr.,
Piero Montanini, William O'Connor, Pat Morrissey,
Margaret Organ-Kean, Mark Poole, Jeffrey G. Reitz,
Ron Rousselle II, Ron Shuey, Brian Snōddy,
Ron Spencer, Susan Van Camp, Christina Wald,

Kevin Ward, and Dameon Willich.



ontrary to what you might think, Magic: The Gathering® did not spring full-blown from the mind of Richard Garfield. Nor, for that matter, did Gary Gygax conjure Dungeons & Dragons® out of thin air. Both Garfield and Gygax—indeed, virtually every writer, artist, and publisher who's dabbled in fantasy for the past thirty-plus years—owes debts so substantial to J.R.R. Tolkien that they ought to have shrines in their bedrooms. For it was Professor Tolkien who single-handedly revived the swords-and-sorcery genre with his landmark Lord of the Rings trilogy (published in the mid-1950s and revised in 1966). It was he who introduced contemporary readers to the medieval fantasy world, replete with cranky dwarves, fireball-flinging wizards, and adorable little scamps called hobbits. And it was he who popularized the concept of the heroic quest, where bands of intrepid adventurers navigate a creep-infested landscape in search of fame and fortune. So thank Tolkien for Magic, thank him for D&D, and while you're at it, you can even thank him for Smurfs-after all, a Smurf ain't nothin' but a hobbit dyed blue.

RARITIES IN MIDDLE-EARTH: THE WIZARDS

John W. Curtis III

Why are Aragorn II and Glorfindel II in the fixed set of cards, while Frodo and Galadriel are rare? What rationale was used to decide the rarities for these cards? This is an examination of the processes used to assign rarities to the cards in Middle-earth: The Wizards.

There are basically four rarity categories in **METW** (excluding promotional cards): fixed, common, uncommon, and rare. Within the set of cards, there are 121 rare cards, 121 uncommon cards, and 242 cards that are either common or fixed. Card rarities were assigned based upon three different factors: versatility,

mechanics, and Middle-earth profile. Each card was weighed in each category and then assigned a rarity.

Cards that were very versatile (those that could be played in just about any deck) were likely to be given a common rarity, though some got uncommon. For example, Call of Home can be played on almost any character, so it received a common rating.

Cards that were both versatile and mechanically powerful were generally given an uncommon rarity. For example, Barrow-Wight is simply a hazard creature, but not only is it relatively powerful (with a 12 prowess), but it also causes wounded characters to make a corruption check. This resulted in an uncommon rating.

Cards that were mechanically powerful only in certain situations were given rarer ratings. For example, Bane of the Ithil-Stone doubles all corruption points from Palantiri. This can be massively powerful, but only if your opponent is playing with Palantiri.

REVIEWS & COMMENTARY

Cards that have a high Middle-earth profile (those that most folks will recognize by name) tend to be rare, though some are uncommon. For example, Elrond, Cirdan, and Galadriel, the Elven Lords of Middle-earth (very-high-profile characters), were given rare ratings. Frodo and Bilbo are also rare. While this wasn't a hard-and-fast rule, it provided a guideline for rarity assignment.

The publication of a Tolkien-based card game, therefore, was never a question of *if*, but *when*. The *who* was a foregone conclusion. The folks at Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE) snapped up the coveted Tolkien license in the early 1980s and have been cranking out Middle-earth goods ever since. Some have been gems, like 1991's *Lord of the Rings* roleplaying game. Some have been junk, like 1983's dreary *Fellowship of the Rings* board game, which was about as exciting as a canasta tournament at a nursing home. But grant them this: they know the territory. The number of Middle-earth products from ICE tops one hundred, and that's not counting whatever shows up in today's mail.

Seasoned marketers that they are, the ICE team shrewdly decided to focus **Middle-earth: The Wizards** on a single aspect of the Tolkien trilogy, thus making it accessible to players who wouldn't know a hobbit from a ham sandwich. Players assume the roles of one or more of Tolkien's good-guy wizards (Gandalf, Saruman, Radagast, Alatar, Pallando), then roam the wilds of Middle-earth in an attempt to marshal the forces of the Free Peoples and thwart the evil Sauron. There are several ways to win: By moving the One Ring to Mount Doom and playing certain cards (very unlikely), by having the opposing wizard eliminated, or by accumulating more marshalling points than your opponent (most likely). Sauron himself never makes an actual appearance (at least, he never showed up in my decks); rather, his influence is represented by hazard cards, which players use to make each other miserable.

Yep, it's sort of like Magic—if you misplace your bifocals, you'd be hard-pressed to tell a METW card from a Magic card—but METW has enough quirky innovations to distinguish it from the multitude of play-'em-and-forget-'em copycats. Seemingly derived from the *Reader's Digest* version of the trilogy, METW may not satisfy hard-core Tolkienites. But Gandalf himself couldn't have captured the sprawl of the tril-

ogy, let alone its vivid characterizations and avalanche of detail; imagine the mess if ICE had been foolish enough to try. In a card-game format, **METW** is as faithful an adaptation as we can expect to get.

With its lush pastels and crisp imagery, the artwork evokes the ambiance of a fairy tale, soothing, otherworldly, and inviting. The artist roster reads like a cavalcade of the industry's heaviest hitters. Without exception, they rise to the occasion with outstanding efforts. The Star-Glass card, by Randy Asplund-Faith, shimmers with an ethereal radiance. Rob Alexander's Henneth Annun card looks like a photograph of some long-lost tropical paradise. Angus McBride, a familiar name to ICE aficionados, confirms his reputation as a Middle-earth virtuoso; his Bilbo portrait captures every lovable nuance of one of the trilogy's most memorable characters, while his Lost in Shadow-Lands card depicts a wasteland that's as eerie as it is majestic. If you can find a sale on tiny frames, you'll want to hang these beauties on the wall.

The forty-eight-page rulebook, on the other hand, could've used a little more attention. Though essentially complete, the rules suffer from so-so organization and an assumption that novices can read the designers' minds. A beginner unfamiliar with terms like "tapping" and "tuning" will have to look long and hard to find the definitions here. The opening section of the rulebook fails to clearly identify the cards. (What color is a hazard? What's the difference between a site and a region?) The card symbols aren't explained until the last page. Why do the strategy tips precede the game mechanics? (It doesn't do much good to tell me how to manage my resource cards before I even know what a resource card looks like.) The generous number of extras—the comprehensive turn summary, the remarkably complete index, the full-color map of the entire game world—almost make the rulebook worth the aggravation. Almost.

And then came the fixed sets. We realized that starter decks needed to be playable by themselves. This meant that each one had to have at least twenty mind stats' worth of characters, plenty of high-prowess characters, enough marshalling points to achieve victory, and enough sites to allow a player to play his or her resources. Therefore, fixed sets had to have some high-profile cards in them.

Additionally, we believed that having high-profile cards available in the "common" pool would add excitement (as players would be playing with characters they recognize). The fixed sets also allowed us to ensure that not only were there enough sites, but also that all Havens, Doors of Night, and Gates of

Morning were available (both of which are necessary for many other cards in the game).

When we began designing **METW**, we at ICE were acutely aware of the phenomena that has plagued collectable card games since their beginnings: the player with the most money buys the most powerful cards and wins the most.

To address this issue, we took two approaches. First, we attempted to ensure that there were no cards that would always be in every deck. While we will not know if we succeeded in this matter for a while, I think that we were at least very close to achieving this goal. The second approach was addressed in rarities. By not giving a

rare rating to the obviously powerful cards, most players will be able to play with the power cards if they like. However, clever players will use the rare cards to enhance a good strategy and in the process create moments of the game that are unforgettable ("Do you remember that time that I got all the way to Mount Doom and tested that ring, only to discover that it was a Dwarven Ring?").

John W. Curtis III is a member of the team which designed **Middle-earth: The Wizards**. Once you've unraveled the rules, you're ready to examine the cards. The basic game uses four types: character, resource, hazard, and site. A typical starter deck includes an adequate number of every type, though a booster or two makes for a more satisfying mix. And I was tickled to discover that unlike, say, the **Star Trek: The Next Generation Customizable Card Game**, where you can open boosters until your fingers fall off before you'll find a Captain Picard or a U.S.S. Enterprise, **METW** doesn't skimp on the stars; I found Gandalf and Bilbo in the same starter deck.

Players sort their cards into location decks (containing their sites) and play decks (containing their characters, resources, and hazards), draw eight-card hands, then roll a die to see who goes first. The active player begins by organizing his or her characters into companies, discrete groups that operate more or less as single units.

Each character has a fixed number of influence points and mind points; influence points determine how many other characters a player can control, while mind points determine how many influence points it takes to control that player. For example, Radagast (Influence 10) might control Peath (Mind 4) and Imrahil (Mind 6). Additionally, each player has 20 general influence points to distribute as he or she wishes. Companies occupying the same geographic location (designated by site cards) can swap members, as long as they adhere to the influence requirements. Resource cards also affect influence: the Lesser Ring card boosts a character's Influence by 2, while The One Ring boosts it by 5.

All companies are assigned to sites, representing significant Middle-earth landmarks. During the movement phase, players have the option of leaving each of their companies at its current site, or playing a new site card face down, indicating the company's intended destination. If the player has any facedown sites, he or she reveals one of them. The revealed site grants bonus cards to each side. The Goblin-Gate site, for example, grants one bonus card to the friendly player and two bonuses to the enemy. A ribbon along the side of the card contains symbols showing the types of terrain the company must navigate to reach its destination; Goblin-Gate has two tree symbols, indicating two stretches of wilderness.

After a new site is unveiled, the opponent can play hazard cards to harass the company as it moves to its new location. The symbols on a hazard card must be compatible with the symbols on the site, or the hazard won't work; the opponent could play a Giant Hazard on the Goblin-Gate, since the Giant also has two wilderness symbols, but the player couldn't play an Orc Warriors Hazard, since the orcs only appear at sites with a borderland symbol.

Each hazard inflicts a specific number of strikes, which affect the corresponding number of characters in the company; the Giant strikes one character, the Orc Warriors strike three. To make a strike, the attacking player adds the hazard's prowess rating to a dice roll. The total is compared to the target's prowess, taking into account modifiers and resource cards. If the hazard's prowess exceeds the target's prowess, the target is wounded. The player must then make a body check by rolling dice and comparing the result to his or her body rating. If the roll exceeds the body rating, the character bites the dust. The company's survivors may then explore the site, which might lead them to magical treasures, introduce them to new allies, or subject them to another round of attacks.

Companies not only face external threats from hazards but also internal threats from corruption. In the novels, Middle-earth dwellers were bombarded with seductive enticements, which often led them to ruin. In **METW**, characters acquire corruption points whenever they succumb to avarice or their attention wavers from the task at hand. A character distracted by the Lure of Nature, for example, receives two corruption points. If the player uses the Star-Glass to prevent an attack, he or she must make a corruption check by rolling two dice, comparing the result to the character's corruption point total. A failed check means the character is out of the game. It's an elegant simulation of Tolkienesque temptation, and the game's best feature.

Players wanting more detail can experiment with the advanced rules, which expand the movement system, allow players to post guard cards on unexplored sites, and enable friendly characters to spend influence points on enemy allies. There's also a viable solitaire option that's great fun, even though (ahem) the designers neglected to spell out the victory conditions.

Any problems with the main game? A few. Some of the rules seem unnecessarily complicated; in addition to mind, body, prowess, and corruption points, players must also keep tabs on two kinds of influence points and six kinds of marshalling points. Others seem unnecessarily harsh; if your Wizard loses a corruption check, you lose the game. And though the players toss hazards at each other on behalf of the evil Sauron, their characters rarely interact; in theory, they could spend the entire game on opposite ends of Middle-earth and never meet.

METW may not always soar, but it never sinks, supported as it is by a rock-solid foundation of smart rules and rich characters. The barrage of decisions (When should I deploy my Wizard? Should I stash some resources at a friendly site or keep them all in play? Is the Star-Glass worth a corruption check?) keeps you on your toes from the moment you dispatch your first company. Best of all, the emotional subtext gives METW a resonance lacking in most games. The rules reward bravery, encourage charity, and punish greed; if you don't take these lessons to heart, you'll find yourself up the Rivendell River without a paddle. Despite the occasional stumble, I liked METW a lot, and I'm anxious to play it again. Next time, I may even invite a Smurf.

Freelance author Rick Swan dabbles in game design at his palatial estate in exotic Des Moines, Iowa.





A FORCED EFFORT:

Star Wars $^{ ext{@}}$ Customizable Card Game $^{^{ ext{ iny TM}}}$

A Review by Allen Varney (a.varney | @genie.com)



ou already know what this review will say.
You can have fun with Decipher's **Star Wars**Customizable Card Game™ if you buy a *lot* of cards. Buy in big, or you'll get nowhere. The cards look beautiful, and they enhance the *Star Wars*® universe, but the game isn't all there yet. Forget about finding the main movie characters. Combat works fine.
Collectors and devout fans will love these cards, but gamers less intensely interested in the *Star Wars* movies should treat the design as an exciting generic space combat, not particularly evocative of the films but still fun—if you buy in big.

You knew that. After all, you waited for this game until you turned pale blue, right? As soon as it hit the shelves in late December, everyone you know bought some decks, and everyone gave you an opinion. Or you saw a million posts online. Or you've already played it yourself. Right?

No wonder Decipher didn't send out advance review copies. I write this review barely ten days after the game's release, but by the time these words hit print, every gamer in the English-speaking world will already have bought **Star Wars** or decided not to. Nobody needs the premise explained. Everyone, except children under two, knows George Lucas' three mega-hit space opera movies, *Star Wars* (1977), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). Every gamer knows that Decipher, publisher of the troubled

Star Trek: The Next Generation™ trading card game, has written off its relationship with Paramount Pictures and found licensed happines's with the Lucasfilm studio. Word of mouth about Star Wars has undoubtedly spread as if through hyperspace, faster than light.

What, then, can a review offer? Impersonations of the *Star Wars* characters, word games, sweepstakes prizes? This piece leans hard on historical perspective, design analysis, and dumb jokes. Hey, I'm not proud.

- Q: Why does it take so long to produce a Star Wars game?
- A: You have to get signed releases from all those Ewoks.

Though *Star Wars* was one of the last big licensed properties to arrive in the adventure gaming hobby, it affected the field from the first movie's 1977 debut. The early influence showed up most clearly in SPI's interesting grand strategic war game *Freedom in the Galaxy*™ (1978) and in the short-lived RPG *Star Ace*™ (Pacesetter, 1984). Both featured heroic rebels battling an evil galactic empire, although *Freedom* was an abstract political simulation whereas *Star Ace* went for goofy zip-zap-zoom planet hopping.

Only in 1987 did the real article finally reach the field, with *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*™ (West End Games). Designed by Greg Costikyan, with a 1989 rules supplement by Greg Gorden, this excellent RPG showed clear understanding of the *Star Wars* virtues, especially in its sensitive ethical treatment of the Force. It also had first-class production values, a virtue shared by the new Decipher card game.

You liked the look of the **Star Wars** cards, didn't you? You couldn't miss the similarity to Decipher's **Star Trek: The Next Generation** cards—the slick design, handsome typefaces, and beautifully reproduced still photos, printed by
Carta Mundi on sturdy stock. And perhaps even more than
the **Trek** cards, these have appeal for the non-gaming card
collector. The three-line lore descriptions, the newly created
backgrounds for obscure characters, the close-ups of blast
door controls and droid detectors—devoted fans love these. If
you know who Biggs Darklighter is, this is your game.

It all looks as pretty as **Star Trek.** And the similarities continue, which is the big problem.

- Q: How many Decipher designers does it take to change a light bulb?
- A: We at Decipher are sorry some customers have failed to appreciate the design subtlety of their darkened rooms. Our commitment to excellence is clear to anyone with the proper infrared sighting equipment. Out of generosity, we are spending a million dollars to ship free light bulbs to your retailer.

The complaints gamers made over and over about Decipher's **Star Trek** game were that (1) the main characters were too hard to find, and (2) starter decks were unplayable. Let's defer the first point and go right to Decipher's Warp Packs for the **Star Trek CCG**. Speaking personally, if I had to distribute a million bucks' worth of free fifteen-card booster packs nationwide to fix the problem of unplayable starter decks, I would learn from the experience. In later games I would try to make the starters playable. Maybe you, like me, were surprised to find that Decipher has not only made **Star Wars** starters unplayable, they're even *more* unplayable than **Trek** starters. One of these "starters" is just an arbitrary stack of cards.

A company netrep said that if you take the thirty Light Side (good) and thirty Dark Side (evil) cards in one starter and trade half with an opponent, you can each play a game with the requisite sixty cards. Yes, and you can also hold the cards in your teeth, but your hands work better. Two starters—at least, any two of the three starters I got—can't pretend to make practical decks. In your starters, did you get characters like Rebel Pilots and Imperial Pilots with no starfighters for them to fly? Planetary systems with no accompanying on-planet sites, or (in the case of the Death Star) vice versa? Timer Mines that are deployed by mining droids, but no mining droids? Effects that create "nighttime conditions" on a planet, but no cards that use these conditions? Interrupts that depend on your Tusken Raiders or Stormtroopers, except that—oh well. Did this happen to you?

Fortunately, I also had six boosters, and from my 270 cards I cobbled together two barely passable decks. Now the fun finally began, because **Star Wars** is a sound design, clearly explained in a good rulebook. It's fun to take control of systems and sites and win by sucking your opponent's cards down to zero. Using your deck as a reservoir of Force (life) points is clever, like a game of **Magic** where your life total equals the cards in your library. Laying out sites in lines, like the spaceline in **Trek**; deploying characters, then equipping them with vehicles and weapons and neat stuff; slugging it out, Light versus Dark, with power totals augmented by "destiny" draws from your deck; dealing with "attrition" losses mandated by destiny; moving from site to adjacent site, shuttling from a planet into space, flying from system to system—it's all fun.

The design smoothly conjures episodes of heroism, villainy, and fighting-fighting-fighting. Even my weak, emaciated decks, obvious bantha fodder for any player with more cards, still got pulses racing as my generic Rebel Guard and

a generic R2 droid held Tatooine's Docking Bay 94 against the Empire's Chief Bast and the corrupt but well-armed tax collector Feltipern Trevagg. (The guard panicked and called in a Shivastanen Wolfman.) Decipher's early **Star Trek** publicity stressed how "characters in the *Star Trek* universe are too mature to be blatantly aggressive." The designers are having no truck with maturity in **Star Wars**. Forget maturity, deploy that blaster rifle! This is war!

The question is, is it Star Wars?

In two respects, I don't think so. The first, character rarity, is discussed below. The second concerns the game's handling of the Force. It surrounds and penetrates us, it binds the galaxy together, but in the Star Wars card game it's just a deck of cards doubling as life points. When you watched players dealing cards onto their Force Pile, then spending the cards to deploy other cards, then re-circulating them from the Used Pile back to the Reserve Deck, did you feel like they were really using the Force, the way Luke used it to cream the Death Star? Did it bug you that in Decipher's system, not only Jedi Knights, but everybody on both sides, was technically using the Force all the time? When Grand Moff Tarkin is using the Force, something feels wrong. The Force, a symbol of ethical conduct, here is reduced to a mere movie term arbitrarily wrapped around a game mechanic.

In one respect this *Premiere Edition* does duplicate a true (if frustrating) aspect of the *Star Wars* series—it's not finished. The rulebook says that later expansions will add rules for bounty hunting (capturing opposing cards) and, finally, the actual Death Star that all these Death Star sites attach to. If you had designed this game, do you think you might have found room in 324 cards for the Death Star? Or Chewbacca, or R2-D2? Me too! And what do we have in their place? Piles of nothing: Obi-Wan's Cape, Tusken Breath Mask, Jawa Siesta, Vaporators, "Look Sir, Droids," Boring Conversation Anyway, "Luke! Luuuke!" and, so help me, an Ommni Box—one of the musical instruments played in the cantina. Every object and every memorable line in the movies looks likely to show up on its own card. This prompts the following question:

- Q: How many cards can a Decipher designer make out of the first sentence of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address?
- A: Forty-nine: Gettysburg, The Lectern, Abe's Speech, Four Score and Seven, Our Fathers, The Bringing Forth, This Continent, New Nation, Conceived in Liberty, Dedicated, The Proposition, All Men, Created Equal, thirty-four named audience members, Applause, and Abe's Back. The Abe Lincoln card costs \$75.

When you were looking forward to this card game, and then when you first looked through the cards, you probably thought of all the great scenes you enjoyed in the movies. Maybe your favorite part was in the cantina, or the first space battle as the *Millennium Falcon* blasts off from Tatooine, or Han and Luke's comic byplay in the Death Star control room,

or our heroes in the garbage masher, or....Like the **Star Wars** *Premiere Edition*, this list gets only halfway through the first film. All these scenes involve interesting characters that we care about. These characters, more than the blaster bolts and the planets exploding, are what make *Star Wars* such a compelling story.

The rarity of the major film characters in *Star Wars* has provoked bitter complaint. The people who bought a backpack full of **Star Trek** cards without finding Captain Picard now buy whole boxes of **Star Wars** without seeing Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, or any other recognizable face. Even the neat vehicles and locations (*Millennium Falcon*, the cantina) are rare. The same players get uncommon cards uselessly keyed to specific rares. For instance, "Luke's Back" brings the Luke card back to life.

Any buyer of a *Star Wars* game can legitimately expect the popular characters to show up. In that sense, as in the Force approach described above, the Decipher game fails to capture its subject. Although it's fun to send your Jawas tootling across the Jundland Wastes in a landspeeder to fight military droids led by Commander Praji, you may justly observe that it doesn't feel much like the movies. Yet unlike the starter problem, character rarity is not itself a design issue. The game isn't exactly *Star Wars* when its Wars lack a recognizable Star, but it still works.

As later unlimited editions appear, the issue of character rarity will fade. However, its existence indicates Decipher's attitude, which emphasizes the collectability of **Star Wars** over its game play. This has led to a genuine design flaw, known generically in some circles as the "Great Rare Problem."

The **Star Wars** designers, Technical Game Services, believe in the thrill of the hunt. Designer Tom Braunlich (who also co-designed **Trek**) demonstrated this when he addressed the rarity issue in a December statement posted on the Internet. The memo's candor is both fascinating and unsettling.

Braunlich wrote that earlier plans to make the major characters common were changed because "collectors who had already pre-ordered boxes were angry that the most collectable characters would be relegated to a cheap card. . . . Not only does it hurt collectability if the main characters are common, but our playtesting found that the playability was also unsatisfactory—and it also lacked logic since common cards can't be stronger than rare cards, and thus the remaining cards in that set made little sense relative to rarity. It just didn't work. . . . The most popular cards simply must be relatively hard to find; that's the nature of these games."

Collectors should feel heartened. Players, though, may note several points for discussion:

(1) "The playability was also unsatisfactory." Braunlich does not elaborate, but presumably the high power values of the major characters created such high combat totals that destiny draws (which boost these totals unpredictably) lost relevance. Also, high ability scores may have reduced the usefulness of weapons and devices, which often depend on destiny draws that exceed the target's ability. If true, fair enough. But these are only technical design problems, fixable in any number of ways. The idea that a *Star Wars* game inherently suffers because the major *Star Wars* characters are common is not defensible.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

TOM BRAUNLICH

The Star Wars Customizable Card Game was a marvelous design challenge. We had many ambitious goals, all of which had to be executed using only the material in a few hours' worth of film. Fortunately, the richness of George Lucas's fantasy world made this possible.

The main goal of the design was to simulate as much as possible the feel of the *Star Wars* universe, allowing players to experience the emotions of *Star Wars* as they play. This meant featuring concepts like the Force, good vs. evil, the large number of droids, aliens, and alien landscapes, plus the excitement of tense battles and heroic actions. The other major goal was to have a fun and quick game, focusing on battle, as the *Star Wars* stories themselves do.

We achieved these goals by implementing several new elements. The most visible of these is the split of the cards into "Light Side" and "Dark Side" cards, with one player required to play each role. You will notice that the functionality of the two sides also mirrors Star Wars. They are not equal, and each side has cards that the other does not. From a design standpoint, we had to create a "dynamic equilibrium"—the Dark Side is generally more powerful, but the Light Side is sneaky and slippery. It took a lot of experimentation to arrive at a balance of cards between the two sides, which have very different feels but a roughly equal amount of strength.

To me, the most interesting aspect of the game is the way the Force is simulated. The game is essentially a battle of the Force between the two sides, and the one who manipulates his or her Force most cleverly wins.

This was achieved through three very unusual new features—the use of the cards themselves as Force units, the draw deck as the amount of Life Force the player has, and the way this Force is circulated. The cards in your deck indicate Life Force—yet you must also put those cards into play in order to try to attack the opponent's forces and defend your own. Instead of drawing cards into their hand as usual, players "activate Force" from the Reserve Deck, which can be either used to provide Force to "pay for" ractions in play or be drawn into players' hands. Force a player uses to pay for things is circulated back into his or her reserves.

This Force circulation creates many strategies and tactics that are unique to SW:CCG. When you play a card, to deploy a character, for example, you accumulate certain advantages; however, doing so also depletes a unit of Force from your Life Force. A player must

(2) It's a truism that "common cards can't be stronger than rare cards." But in a good design, rares shouldn't be stronger than commons, either; cards should be balanced against one another regardless of rarity. A card should be rare only because it is more narrowly useful or has effects confusing to novices. The statement that the remaining Star Wars cards make "little sense relative to rarity" is, or should be, meaningless. But Braunlich evidently thinks rarity should equal power.

(3) Braunlich also equates popularity with scarcity—"that's the nature of these games." Which games? In Magic, an advanced player with an expensive deck must still respect a common Fireball or Howl From Beyond. If you could build a tournament deck with all the green rares you wanted, would you leave out Giant Growth? Ideally the nature of these games, as opposed to these collectable card sets; is that they're playable and fun for the whole target audience.

The collector's mentality shows in many Decipher statements. A netrep spoke of the "emotional" impact of finding a rare character and added, "If everyone had Luke, would you like it as much?" As a player, I don't get this. Luke goes in my Light deck, and my opponent is playing Dark; I'm the only one in the game with Luke. If the Light player at the next table doesn't have Luke, am I supposed to feel cool? I can't identify who first said, "It's no fun being rich unless others are poor," but clearly Decipher endorses this idea.

Decipher's arbitrary designations of rarity, involved as they are with players' emotional expectations ("I want Han!" "Then he's rare."), create something of a class distinction among gamers, an artificial system of haves and have-nots based on luck and money.

Q: How can you tell when a game company gets a Star Wars license?

A: The publisher starts wearing sports jackets made of \$100 bills.

So you've read this far, even though you already knew what to think about **Star Wars**. Thank you! It may be pointless to review a game that will certainly sell hundreds of millions of cards regardless of quality. But we can hope that by bringing to light its virtues and flaws, other designers will heed the lessons. Possibly even Decipher, which talks about its "unreasonably high standard of excellence" more often than the record justifies, may modify later **Star Wars** editions to provide better value. If so, those will be the editions to buy, because the game rules proper deserve respect.

Earlier I listed some of the *Star Wars* scenes you might consider favorites. I'll close with my own: the peaceful moment halfway through *Return of the Jedi* where C-3PO is telling the Ewoks about the adventures of Luke, Leia, Han, and the rest. As the droid tells the tale,

the audience sits raptly, eyes wide with wonder, hearts caught up in this splendid tale. This scene exactly sums up for me the entire *Star Wars* phenomenon.

Allen Varney is a freelance writer.

His reviews appear regularly

in The Duelist.

determine when a deployment is worthwhile, which depends on the current situation. The efficiency with which each player manages his or her Force is critical.

Other features of the game are *destiny numbers* (which partly determine the outcomes for a variety of actions or battles), and *attrition* (an aspect of battles that adds realism without getting into complexities like degrees of damage). Attrition also allows for many situations in which a strong military force can be successfully attacked by a weaker force—allowing for the kind of heroic actions that permeate the films.

As you play, remember that the game also had to be designed to have enough depth to last for years and to accommodate all the future cards that will come into play in the expansion sets for *Empire Strikes Back*, etc. Leaving room to expand means that there are many aspects of play that will be developed

more fully as the expansions come out. Jedi skills and abilities will play an everincreasing role, and concepts like bounty
hunters, capturing, Death Stars, and so
on have been saved for later. Feedback
from players will help us decide the particulars of how to expand, what elements to emphasize, and so on.
Decipher is happy to receive comments
about game play, and we will attempt to
integrate as much feedback as possible.

One fun aspect of working on SW:CCG was the opportunity to name new characters and other cards. For example, many of the aliens that are only seen in the shadows of the cantina in the movie could be shown clearly on cards. Yet most of these characters had no names or histories. Working with Lucasfilm and West End Games, we were able to create names, backgrounds, and other interesting details for them, as well as for miscellaneous pieces of equipment. This new information is considered offi-

cial and was coordinated to match with other sources of information, including some of the novels and other *Star Wars* materials. Each of the characters and items pictured, however, is based on canonical information in the film itself.

The research gave us new respect for the richness of the movies, and the SW:CCG cards extend this pleasure by allowing fans to focus on these details and enjoy them close up. The game allows us to play "What if?" scenarios, exploring them and getting a feel for what could have happened in the movie. Playing SW:CCG, you wonder how Luke ever made it through Mos Eisley alive, much less the Death Star. The Force must have been with him! May the Force be with you!

Tom Braunlich is a member of Technical Game Services and co-designer of Star Wars: The Customizable Card Game.

Capsule Reviews

LEGEND OF THE FIVE RINGSTM

(Alderac Entertainment Group/Isomedia, Ontario, CA) Design: Dave Williams, with Ryan S. Dancey and Matt Wilson Format: 308-card set; 4 rarities. 60-card starter deck, \$7.95; 15-card booster pack, \$2.45. For 2–6 players; 1–4 hours.

This delightful and skillfully designed game sends six noble families scrambling for the throne of the Japanese-style fantasy empire Rokugan. Each player, a lord of one clan, starts with a Stronghold (printed on each starter box) that has a unique power.

Clans command samurai, ninjas, Wily Traders, and other Personalities. These in turn use personal honor to command Followers. Equip these units with spells and weapons, paying for them with gold from mines, ports, markets, stables, and Jade Works. To accrue Family Honor points, units attack enemy provinces, which serve as staging areas used to introduce new cards into play. You lose if all your provinces are destroyed or if you drop to -20 Honor;

destroyed or if you drop to -20 Honor;
you win by defeating all other
players, starting a turn with
40 Honor, or playing all
five Elemental Ring cards.
From Sanctified
Temples to Honorable
Seppuku, Legend of
the Five Rings
conjures the

milieu of feudal Japan as vividly as an Akira Kurosawa film.

Every game tells a story of honor and dishonor, heroism and betrayal. Players stay involved constantly, playing cards and dispatching armies during other players' turns. Battles are intricate contests of maneuver. In the game's neatest feature, two leaders square off in a samurai-style challenge, a suspenseful contest of wills in which players play Focus cards to aid their Chi totals prior to a single, all-or-nothing strike.

Sold in clan-specific starters, the game plays well out of the box and presents many deck-design options. Cards are balanced, and combinations abound.

The rich design of **Legend of the**Five Rings makes it a bit tricky to learn, so expect to spend several games feeling your way along. Rules holes will set novices pondering. Also, multi-player

L5R breaches design principles by letting players get knocked out before the end and by letting anyone attack anyone, which leads to the curse of kingmaking. Set up rules to cure these ills.

You'll want more than house rules, though, to change what some will regard as a major drawback: the game's length. Four or five players with decent decks can expect to spend an entire evening on one game. You could play to lower Honor totals, but then the game ends before it's fairly started; it takes time to show the game's virtues.

But start early, try to move it along, and **Legend of the Five Rings** will captivate you. If you like strong atmosphere, intricate battles, and things Japanese, then buy a couple of starters, browse Musashi's *Book of Five Rings*, and prepare to claim the throne. Banzai!

—Allen Varney

THE CROW™

(Target Games, Stockholm, Sweden)

Design: Bryan Winter

Format: 105-card set. 15-card
booster with rules, \$2.95.

For 2+ players; 30–60 minutes.

Based on the movie, **The Crow** uses images from the film as its art and the

conflict between Angels and Devils as its premise. The movie tells the story of Eric Draven, a nice guy who returns from the grave to avenge himself and his fiancée on the gangsters who killed them.

The game includes two categories of cards, Souls and Specials. All Soul cards are creatures that fall into one of three categories: Angels, Devils, or Bystanders. Special cards fall into three categories: those that require an action to bring them into play, those that are only used during combat, and a few that can be used at any time.

Most of the Special cards simply modify a Soul's Attack Rating and Defense Rating. The higher of the two is the card's Virtue, which is the cost to bring it into play and the number of Vengeance points it's worth if killed.

Play is simple; each player gets three actions per turn. The most basic action is putting a card into play; to do so, you must discard cards from your hand equaling or exceeding the Virtue of the card entering play. The second basic action is an attack; the attacker decides who the attacker and defender are. Once a card is successfully attacked, it is wounded. If it is wounded again, it is killed and removed from the game, with all its attachments. That's it; no blocking, no tapping, no messy timing rules. The first player to accumulate 25 Virtue points wins.

You'll need at least sixty cards to put together a basic deck—double that for a stronger, more playable deck. Every pack contains the rules, so the initial outlay is small. Because you wind up discarding cards to bring cards into play, it plays well out of the pack.

Most importantly for a licensed product, the game stays true to the tone and spirit of the movie: it's all about combat and attitude, with a shallow vengeance plot to justify its excesses.

This is an easy game for experienced players to pick up and a good one to introduce newcomers to TCGs. It's worth a look for anyone looking for a simple game or a different flavor, but it's not for advanced players looking for new design innovations.

-Wolfgang Baur



Legend of the Five Rings and Shadowlands are $^{\text{TM}}$ and $^{\text{C}}$ 1995 Alderac Entertainment Group and ISOMEDIA. Artwork $^{\text{C}}$ Randy Elliott, Matt Wilson, and Carl Frank 1995.

FITUUIJET by J. M. White NEW YEAR'S LUCK

A Worried Market

While it has received its share of criticism (not to mention the fall release of the set causing many to compare it to *Fallen Empires*TM), *Homelands*TM is a beautifully produced product which has done well in the marketplace. Sales reports from retailers have been positive, an impressive feat at a time when retail sales in the trading-card-game market overall have dropped thirty to forty percent. *Ice Age*TM and *Chronicles*TM, controversial products to begin with, have also held up well. While sales are nowhere near what they could have been eighteen months ago, **Magic**TM is aging well for a product two-and-a-half

years old. The December changes at Wizards of the Coast are likely to make a big difference in the coming months for **Deckmaster**™ products.

In the industry at large, the sheer number of scheduled trading-card-game releases from established companies and from young entrepreneurs has caused a slump in sales of new TCG products. Some distributors I've talked to say

they can't even sell a single box of a new release to their stores. With tax season ahead, cash flow problems are at an all-time high. It's going to take some time before the dust settles enough on deceased games and defunct distributors to restore the retailers' faith in the lines which *are* thriving. Many companies have taken a wait-and-see approach to the launch of their first TCG and have delayed product releases until the spring or summer.



A New Holiday Favorite

"No game has hit the market with the same furor as a **Magic** release."

-J. M. White, "The Diviner," Duelist #7

Well, it was a true statement then.... Star Wars has launched itself to the top of the list this holiday season, eclipsing almost every product except Middle-earth and Magic: The Gathering. Those dubious about the game-play quality have found it to be playable, and collectors are paying up to \$50 for Darth Vader and Han Solo. The standard deck set from Parker Brothers, scheduled for release in February, could gain much interest for Star Wars and hopefully other TCGs—we'll see.

Middle-earth is a strong TCG market-share contender and has caused a real furor among North American Tolkien fans. And it is even more popular in Europe! Singles of the game are starting to be widely sold, even by stores who swore the set was too big for them to handle in inventory—which shows you what demand can do. Other stores are wary of carrying any single card inventory until Magic prices pick up.

Heresy[™], released just before the holidays, is also quietly carving out a spot for itself. Although its game mechanics have

been compared to other TCG products, **Heresy** has by far the biggest list of famous artists associated with it. Collectors have created an interest in singles, and individual cards are already being sold in some stores.

Although the sports TCGs have yet to cause the crazed swarms we first imagined, the NFL game, **Red Zone**TM, and the major-league baseball game,

Top of the Order[™], both by Donruss, have done extremely well during a difficult time. I expect a bigger piece of the pie to go to the savvy young design team at NXT games before long. The Upper Deck Company's first venture into the TCG market, Gridiron Fantasy Football[™], has generated mixed response. The two versions of the game (one for the hobby market and another for the mass market) have made it difficult to judge the product's overall success. In fact, it has become much harder to gauge the success of any of the TCGs available in the large chain stores, including Magic. As large amounts of product fly through or remain on shelves of the mass-market stores and bookstores, market trends become harder to identify—products which sell slowly at your local game store may be whisked off the shelves in an hour at Wal-Mart...well, maybe two hours....

Predictions for '96

That was then; this is now: Star Date January 6, 1996. On the TCG market's top tier are Magic: The Gathering™, Star Wars, and Middle-earth—interchange the order at will. The second tier includes OverPower™, Guardians™, Shadowfist™,

Some distributors I've

talked to say they

can't even sell a single

box of a new release

to their stores.

and others that did well in the summer and fall and continue to thrive. Below this are older, dormant releases which are kept alive by the power of the companies which produce them and the active following that the games enjoy. In the dungeon are those products which don't get played, don't sell, and are generally gathering dust. As the weight of these products increases, stores and distributors become sluggish, making consumers and retail stores reasonably cautious about trying new products.

The future? The number of large, established companies from other industries (comics, sports, games, toys, etc.) entering the TCG market continues to increase. As I write, a number of big names are planning crosspromotional activities for 1996: You'll probably see major chains with promotions and product endorsements for TCGs, like the upcoming Highland Farms "Munchables" promotion with Fleer, which features the Marvel OverPower characters associated with

Spider-man. By summer, I expect the cross-promotion phenomenon to be big: that's when Skybox has plans to release a non-collectable card game for the younger set which is based on the Disney movie, The Hunchback of Notre Dame. The game will also have ties to Skybox's trading card and sticker lines, including blank game cards which can be used with collectable stickers to create

special cards for the game.

By far the most important upcoming product is the Microprose Magic: The Gathering computer game, which could change the TCG industry more than any other release this year. It remains to be seen whether the computer game will get more people interested in the printed cards or if the existence of an electronic version of Magic will cause the card market to suffer. My bet is on an increased interest in the cards. I think Microprose's game may excite more people into playing Magic: The Gathering, leading them to buy

cards to carry around. As a result, the single-card trade has the potential to be infused with players trying to strategize off-line for their on-line battles. The interactive potential of the computer game is huge. I can't wait to see what happens.

The other WotC activity to watch for is the Magic: The Gathering professional tournament tour which kicks off in February 16-18 in New York City. Although the first event is small (consisting of 350 players or so) the interest in last year's National and World Magic Championships suggests that these tournaments may become popular spectator events. For a \$10 admission fee, spectators will be able to watch the top players in the world battle it out for the grand prize—a grand cash prize: \$30,000 in cash for the 18 and older division, and equal that in scholarship money for the juniors. These tournaments will be held in several cities in the coming months, so watch for the announcements. (For more information about the Magic professional tournaments, see the Pro Tour article on page 70 in this issue of The Duelist.)

If all goes well with WotC's 1996 marketing campaign, prices for out-of-print cards which have settled or even decreased over the last few months should increase again this year as

interest in collecting grows (hopefully associated with the Microprose release). The prices for the latest Magic releases-Ice Age, Chronicles, and Homelandshave already reached their peak, and in the case of the

> first two of these, both of which had huge print runs, prices are likely to stabilize to a reasonably low level this year. Once the cards go out of print, prices may increase, but with the number of cards available, this

could take a while.

Even though Star Wars was the last big product

announced for early 1996, and first quarter shows no releases of great magnitude, there are still some big products in the wings for spring and summer. The sports games haven't really had a chance to dig their cleats in yet, and a number of similar products are planned. There are also major licenses which have yet to be slated for production but which are likely to see light this year. Don't fret-there is still a sky overhead.

Best wishes to you and yours for the new year, and in the immortal words of a close friend: 'rots 'er 'ruck.





SCRYE'S TOP NINE HOMELANDS CARDS

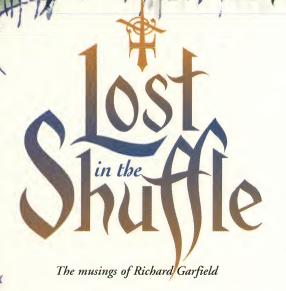
(Scrye #12 Upper Quartile)

Baron Sengir \$10.00
Primal Order \$7.50
Mystic Decree \$7.00
Apocalypse Chime\$6.00
Marjhan \$6.00
Sengir Autocrat \$6.00
Autumn Willow \$5.90
Serra Aviary
Faerie Noble \$5.20

Homelands is a limited-edition expansion for Magic: The Gathering.

> J. M. White is the publisher of Scrye: Guide to Collectible Card Games, the first publication to list single card prices for CCG cards. Scrye features a complete price guide for Magic: The Gathering in every issue and is available almost everywhere TCGs (CCGs) are sold.





THE HOT CHOCOLATE OF GAMES

hat defines a game? Chess consists of a set of rules. But chess is also the shape of the pieces, the manner in which the game is played, the history of the game. If you always play chess in front of a fire with a cup of hot chocolate, then for you this atmosphere is part of the game itself. You might think of a game of chess as a person: The rules—the object of the game, the functions of the pieces—are the skeleton, relatively inflexible and providing structure for the rest. Then there is the body, or form of the game—the colors of the board, the military names, and the shapes of the pieces.

The flavor that a game has can completely change the experience a player has playing it. If a game has a science-fiction flavor, I will have a different experience than if it has a historical flavor, even if the game rules are essentially the same. Similarly, when I play go, if I play on a plastic board with plastic pieces, my play experience is completely different than if I play with a wooden board and stone pieces. I believe that some players internalize games enough that the environment and trapping of the game make no difference; these people are playing a celestial go, a go that resides only in their hearts and minds. Unfortunately, I am anchored to this world when I play and only occasionally get a visitor's pass to a different world. For many game players, the form and flavor of a game is as important as the rules themselves.

But there is more to a game than just rules or form. Much of a game consists of the traditions and rituals that the player brings to it. Some of the most interesting elements of a game are the traditions associated with play. Some of them have an obvious origin, such as cutting a deck of cards before the deal, while others, like the tradition of Ace being high in a given game, have a more obscure origin and meaning. Many games of cards have exceptionally strange rankings, making the 7, 8, A, K, Q, J, T, 9 order of cards in Le Truc, for example, seem perfectly normal. Often, these seemingly arbitrary rules—white going first in chess, or black going first in go, for example—are nothing but traditions that have been incorporated over time. Though I am sometimes tempted to teach such games without these arbitrary rules, since they can increase the difficulty of learning, they are a legitimate part of the games, and I always honor and pass them on to new players.

Often players bring their own rituals to games. I know one group of players who would call out, "Magic Realm" whenever two or more people rolled the same number on a die. The call was named for an old Avalon Hill game in which players apparently rolled a lot of ties. Another group would finish a game of *Acquire* by changing their money to the highest denomination and laying their bills down one by one until only one player had any money remaining. The way some people choose to keep track of life in Magic, using stones while others choose paper and pencil or a counter, could be considered a matter of tradition. As with most forms of entertainment, since such traditions change the way a game feels to play, they are truly part of the game.

It is interesting to track how traditions get spread. The call of "Magic Realm" has probably not spread to other gaming groups, but I believe it has spread to new people of the same group who have no idea where the call came from. In time, if the tradition is followed consistently enough, it might even change from tradition to rules of the game. An example of this in my group is the use of a timer in RoboRally™. Using a timer makes the game go more quickly and makes the game play a bit more amusing, so it has become a standard element of our games. Some trading card games now make a rule of knocking the table to indicate when a turn is done, a tradition that sprang up in Magic, and previously existed in many classic card games.

ZEN AND THE ART OF GAME PLAYING

hen I play a game I am very familiar with, I frequently find myself falling into a state of detachment. My body and enough of my brain know the task I am performing so that "I" can take a break. The mind is cleared as the body goes on autopilot, producing a special sort of relaxation—one in which there isn't enough concentration left over to worry about problems outside the game that I otherwise might fixate on. I am told that musicians are familiar with this frame of mind; I experience something akin to this when I juggle, or when I take a shower.

Although the best part of a game is the problem solving and innovation that it stimulates, I know many good game players who aren't at all innovative in certain games. There was probably some problem solving when they learned the game, but eventually they found a skill level they were comfortable with, kicked back, and settled in.

This is particularly apparent with games such as *Uno* or Klondike solitaire. These games have enough luck in them that most people play close-to-optimally anyway. It is obvious that the attraction is not problem solving; instead, I believe it is the ritual of play, the performance of a task players know well for the sake of the task. Just as some people find pleasure and relaxation in the daily rituals of cooking meals, walking the dog, or doing a paper route, many game players get the same pleasure through the ritual of the game. This is something positive that games offer to good and regular players, a part of the art of game play that does not rely on continuous learning and problem solving.

Ritual gaming also provides a comfortable medium in which to relate to other people. The games act as modular rituals that can be fit into any part of the day. Similarly, games can provide an excellent social vehicle for an age in which so many of the social traditions have eroded, leaving many people a little lost when among those they don't know too well. A game provides a good, interactive common ground for dealing with strangers in a social setting, or with friends you have lost touch with. I wouldn't be surprised if game playing were more common among people without much daily routine, as a substitute for other sorts of rituals.

It is certainly not true that a ritual game player is a bad game player. There are many people who play a fine game obridge or chess, even though it is essentially the same game they've played for the last twenty years. I consider this way of playing games no worse than my continuing to juggle from time to time, even though I've learned no new moves in years. One might think of this method of game play as software which ritual players have stopped revising; now they compete their software in the way Magic players compete their decks—they don't stop making decisions once their decks are tuned.

I often partake in ritual play, but there is no doubt that my favorite part of games is discovery. Nothing is quite like the discovery phase of a game, the period in which new players make their first big leaps in skill and the overall game technology is increasing rapidly. Because of this, I really enjoy learning new games. While most people find learning new rules too burdensome to do often, I have incorporated that into my whole game-playing style. You might say that learning new rules and trying new things with games is part of my personal ritual of gaming. For example, I'll seldom play a simple game of chess when I can play a weird variation that I haven't tried before. Are innovation and ritual in games mutually exclusive? I don't think so. One of the reasons I keep coming back to Magic, and why I've repeatedly returned to Cosmic EncounterTM, is because these games have enough variation to satisfy my interest in puzzle solving and innovation, while building a familiarity necessary to bring ritual play to another, higher level.

Understanding the role of ritual in games can add to your enjoyment of playing them. Don't be afraid to institute a convention, or to take pleasure in one you already have. Just as the smell of fresh bread may send you to a past that never really existed, the sounds of shuffling or the feel of the dice—the rituals of the game—may bring a purer pleasure than the play itself.

An avid game player, Richard Garfield (a.k.a Playful AI) is well-known around The Duelist for his ritual of tempting busy editors into playing the latest game he's designed "in his spare time...."



HOLD IT! WHAT IS THIS CYBER-SPACE? I MEAN, YOU'RE JUST SITTING IN FRONT OF YOUR COMPUTER.



IT ALL STARTED WHEN SOMEBODY AT THE RAND CORP. HAD A REMARKABLY GOOD IDEA:

HEY! SCIENTISTS WORKIN'ON
THE SAME KINDA STUFF SHOULD
BE ABLE TO TALK TO EACH OTHER
NO MATTER WHERE THEY ARE
AND DO COMPUTING STUFF TO
EACH OTHER.



THE RESULT WAS ARPANET, WHICH WAS FIRST BROUGHT ON LINE ON LABOR DAY, 1969.

THE FIRST GAME OF 'STAR TREK' WAS PLAYED THREE DAYS LATER.

HA! LET'S SEE YOUR
DAMNED NOBEL PRIZE
BLOCK 200 ROMULANS,
GEHM!

STILL BITTER ABOUT THAT, ARE WE?



IN A FEW YEARS, THE SYSTEM HAD EXPANDED ONTO MAJOR COLLEGES AS AN AID TO GRADUATE AND DOCTORAL RESEARCH.



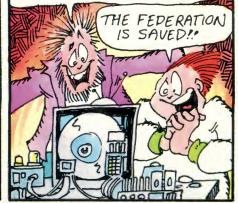


THE CREATION OF A COMMERCIAL NET WAS SIGNIFICANTLY ADVANCED WHEN THESE FIRST STUDENT USERS **GRADUATED.**



13 DAYS LATER ...

STEVE! IT WORKS! A PERSONAL SIZED COMPUTER YOU CAN USE IN THE HOME! DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?



AS THE HARDWARE WAS BEING— CREATED, THE CONCEPT OF 'CYBERSPACE' WAS BEING— DEVELOPED BY S.F. WRITERS.

OK... TRY TO IMAGINE A NET-WORK OF COMPUTER CONNECTED MACHINES ALL OVER THE PLANET, SEE? AND WHEN YOU STICK IN AN I.D. CARD, IT'LL GIVE YOU



AND THE PUBLIC'S EXPECTATIONS WERE SHAPED BY THOUGHTFUL AND WELL RESEARCHED FILMS LIKE TRON

DO YOU THINK YOU COULD LOVE A SIMPLE SUB- ROUTINE LIKEME?

THE SAME MOVIE 13 TIMES? THIS IS OUR LAST DATE, BILL



THE FUTURE THAT CYBERPUNK EMBRACES IS ONE IN WHICH PEOPLE WILL EXPERIENCE A DIRECT NEURAL LINK WITH THEIR COMPUTERS.

YEAH! NO MORE CARPAL TUNNEL FOR ME! AN IMPLANTED NEURAL LINK IS MUCH HEALTHIER!



SO INSTEAD OF JUST READING WORDS ON A SCREEN, YOU CAN EXPERIENCE YOUR PROGRAMS FIRSTHAND. OH BOY.



THE IDEA BEING THAT IN CYBERSPACE, DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROGRAMS WILL APPEAR AS ACTUAL OBJECTS.



CODE PROTECTING SOMEONE'S FILES. LIJOW! WHERE'D YOU GET THE LASER? IT'S ACTUALLY A DECODING PROGRAM.





SOON PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE COMPLETE LIVES IN CYBERSPACE, WHICH WILL BE LIKE LIVING INSIDE A VIDEO GAME.



WITHIN CYBERSPACE, DATA IS EVERYTHING. IT'S THE UNIVERSAL MEDIUM. IT'S CURRENCY, IT'S SECURITY, IT, COMMUNICATION, IT'S A SNACK FOOD.



90-WHOEVER CONTROLS DATA CONTROLS THE POWER. AND EVEN OLD TIME PROGRAMMERS UNDERSTAND THAT.



by Mark Rosewater

I Don't Think So

Your opponent is Monique. She is playing a red/white direct-damage deck while you are playing an all-blue permission deck. The duel is very close, with each of you at 1 life. It is the beginning of Monique's main phase. She needs to defeat you this turn or she will die from one of your Feedbacks during her next upkeep. Who will win the duel, you or Monique?

MONIQUE'S HAND



Lightning Bolt



Fireball



Disintegrate



Pyrotechnics



Red Elemental Blast

MONIQUE (RED/WHITE) 1 LIFE REMAINING



Mana Flare Feedback (2)





Plains (2)



Mountain (5)



Glasses of Urza

YOU (BLUE) 1 LIFE REMAINING



Wall of Water



Glasses of Urza



Island (5)

YOUR HAND



Counterspell



Power Sink





Blue Elemental Blast

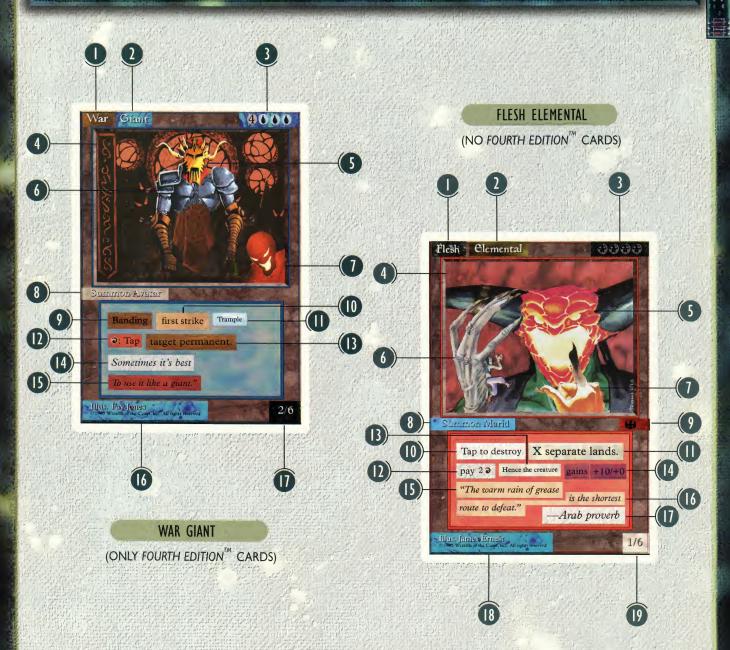


Blue Elemental Blast

by Mark Rosewater

Falling To Pieces

In what I assume passes for evil-twin humor, my doppelganger decided to cut up a number of my cards and turn them into the two creatures you see below. Since he then hid the rest of my cards, I am unsure exactly what cards I need to start collecting again. I was hoping you could help me to identify where all the pieces below came from. The only thing I know is that the "War Giant" is made up completely of Fourth Edition™ cards while the "Flesh Elemental" doesn't have any Fourth Edition in it. I wish you the best of luck.



WAR GIANT

ANSWERS

FLESH ELEMENTAL

- I. Misiad S WAR MACHRIE J. Glavat Toprorg, 1. Blaudo Fish Jacconida 4. Sonceress Quest (Man Poculo) 5. Adentor) 8 Arth: Glast (Make Pocule) 6. Hirwords, Secrita, (Douclas Sinara) 1. NETHER SIMPOW (CHRISTONER RUSH) 8. PERSOARE INCORMATION 9. THIRES WOONES

- 11. LEVATHAN 12. Au Baba 13. Desert Tanster 14. Elder Land Wurm 15. Giant Strength 16. Stasis
- 10. BLACK KNIGHT

- 4. JUZAN DJIWA (MARK TEDIN)
 4. JUZAN DJIWA (MARK TEDIN)
 6. TARIUL WIZARO (ANSON MADDOCKS)
 6. TARIUL WIZARO (ANSON MADDOCKS)
 8. OLD MAN OF THE SEA
 9. NALATHAL DRACON
 10. KRNG SOLEHAN

- I.2. HERORN 13. TAWNOS'S COFFIN 14. GLYPH OF DESTRUCTION 15. GATE TO PAYRESAN 16. EVIL EYE OF ORNS-BY-GORE 17. ARMY OF ALLAN 18. REALTY TWIST 19. MARTYRS OF KORLIS

MAGIC THE PUZZLING

by Mark Rosewater

Name That Card

Your opponent is Lora. You've just won an Ice Age-only tournament and Lora has just won a Fourth Edition-only tournament. Now you're pitting your championship decks against one another. But things are looking mighty bleak. You have but a single card in your library and Lora, at the end of her main phase, has just targeted you with Vexing Arcanix. You quickly realize that only one card will allow you to defeat Lora before your next draw phase. What is the card and how can you win with it?



Enchantment

When Iceberg comes into play, put X ice counters

3 : Put an ice counter on Iceberg.

0 : Remove an ice counter from Iceberg to add one colorless mana to your mana pool. Play this ability as an interrupt.



Magus of the Unseen Summon Wizard

1 6, 3: Untap target artifact opponent controls and gain control of it until end of turn. If that artifact is an artifact creature, it can attack, and you may use any of its abilities that require 🗘 as part of the activation cost. When you lose control of the artifact, tap it.



Vexing Arcanix

3, : Target player names a card and then turns over the top card of his or her library. If that is the card named, put it into the player's hand. Otherwise, put it into the player's graveyard, and Vexing Arcanix deals 2 damage to that player.



Xenic Poltergeist Summon Poltergeist

: Target non-creature artifact becomes an artifact creature with power and toughness each equal to its casting cost. Target retains all original abilities. This change lasts until your next upkeep.

LORA (BLACK/BLUE / GREEN) 6 LIFE REMAINING



Sylvan Library



Goblin Mutant 5/3

Control Magic









Forest (3)

YOU (BLUE/RED) 1 LIFE REMAINING



Island (2)



Wall of Lava 1/3

Wanderlust



Wall of Shields 0/4

Artifact

YOUR LIBRARY



What Card Is It?



Soldevi Golem 5/3



Control Magic

Adarkar Sentinel 3/3



Steal Artifact



Crown of the Ages



Steal Artifact



Steal Artifact





Control

Magic



Island (3)





Swamp (2)



Millstone

1 CARD LEFT IN LIBRARY



Island



Mountain



Mountain



Iceberg 8 counters



Magus of Wanderlust



Xenic Poltergeist 1/1



Wanderlust Binding Grasp



Durkwood Wanderlust Binding Grasp

If you think you have a solution and would like to test it out, or would like to offer general feedback, please feel free to e-mail me at woody@wizards.com. Due to the high volume of responses, I might take a while to respond (and no, I don't give out clues).

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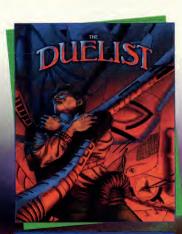


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AD CODE #	Appropries	Dion #
SODE #	ADVERTISER	PAGE #
15	Acclaim Comics	p. 62
16	The Armory	p. 63
28	The Card Vault	p. 121
27	Comic & Fantasy Fair (Roc of Ages '96)	p. 121
12	Deck Protector (Rembrandt)	p. 48
35	Deck Daemon (Bard's Quest Software)	p. 123
13	Duelists' Convocation	p. 73
29	East Coast Cards & Collectibles	p. 121
19	Galactic Empires (Companion Games)	p. 114
22	Game Master Ltd.	p. 119
33	Gator Games	p. 122
37	The Cursed Land (HarperCollins)	p. 127
6	Highlander (Thunder Castle Games)	p. 18
9	Iguana's Comic Book Cafe	p. 31
25	Infinity Comics & Games	p. 120
26	J & M Enterprises	p. 121
2	Killer Instinct (Topps)	p. 1
18	Legend of the Five Rings (Isomedia)	p. 101
1	Magic: The Gathering Desktop Themes (MicroProse)	Inside Front
40	Middle-earth Miniatures (Mithril Miniatures)	p. 126
36	Middle-earth Play-By-Mail (Game Systems)	p. 126
39	Middle-earth RPG (Iron Crown Enterprises)	p. 126
38	Middle-earth: The Wizards (Iron Crown Enterprises)	Inside Back
20	Mishra's Game Factory	p. 115
10	Mythos (Chaosium, Inc.)	p. 32
	NXT Games	p. 120
24	Paul & Judy's Coins & Cards	p. 120
32	Psychic Purge	p. 122
5	Red Zone (Donruss)	p. 41
8	Shadowfist (Daedalus)	p. 30
31	Shahrazad Games	p. 122
30	SpellGround (Khalsa-Brain Games)	p. 122
34	The Supreme Strategist	p. 122
4	INWO-Assassins (Steve Jackson Games)	p. 6
14	Throwing Stones (Gamesmiths)	p. 55
17	Thunder & Lightning	p. 67
5	Top of the Order (Donruss)	p. 12
23	Troll & Toad	p. 120
3	Rage: WarAmazon (White Wolf Game Studio)	p. 4 & 5
7	Wildstorms (Wildstorm Productions)	p. 23
21	Wizard's Guild (Saratoga Sci-Fi Shop)	p. 119
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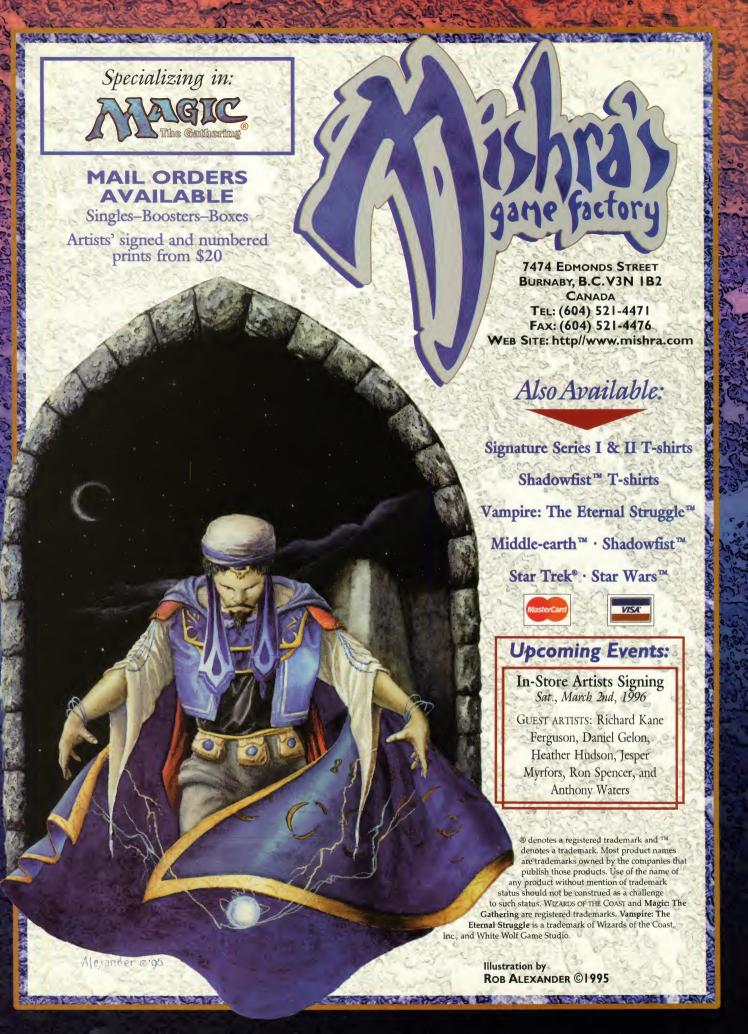
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by Mark Rosewater

You might as well just stop reading right now. The truth is that there are no answers to last issue's puzzles. Whoops!

Please ignore my evil twin. If you must know, he's blackmailed me into sharing my column with him.

"Blackmail" is such a harsh word. I prefer extortion.

Anyway, I'm hoping that if I do some good deeds and explain the solutions to his puzzles from last issue, perhaps he'll go away. Let's get started.



"TIME TO ACT"

(Puzzle published in Duelist #8, pp. 102-103)
The goal of this puzzle is to defeat your opponent, Monty, before you run out of cards. In order to do this, you have to determine all of the ways you are able to do damage to Monty. This consists of all your creatures and the Soul Burn in your hand.
Unfortunately, Monty has a pretty solid defense. The only way you'll be able to attack will be in the air.

On your first turn:

- 1) TAP TWO PLAINS AND TWO SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS TO ADD TWO WHITE (ALL USED AS COLORLESS) AND TWO RED MANA TO YOUR MANA POOL. As your Goblin Ski Patrol is your only flying creature, it becomes the obvious choice to attack.
- 2) USE ONE RED AND ONE COLORLESS MANA TO ACTIVATE THE GOBLIN SKI PATROL. IT IS NOW A 3/1 FLYING CREATURE AND WILL BE BURIED AT THE END OF THE TURN. As you want to do the most damage possible (and since you're only planning to attack with one creature), Errantry seems like a good addition to the Goblin Ski Patrol.
- 3) Use one red and one colorless mana to cast Errantry on the Goblin Ski Patrol. It is now a 6/1 flying creature.
- 4) DECLARE AN ATTACK WITH THE GOBLIN SKI PATROL.
- 5) TAP YOUR KJELDORAN GUARD TO ADD +1/+1 TO YOUR

GOBLIN SKI PATROL, MAKING IT A 7/2 FLYING CREATURE.

6) **DO 7 POINTS OF DAMAGE TO MONTY. THIS REDUCES HIM TO 5 LIFE.** Monty can respond to this attack by casting Swords to Plowshares on the Goblin Ski Patrol, in which case it will do no damage. But as this will prevent Monty from using the Swords to Plowshares later, that's okay.

The Goblin Ski Patrol was able to do some of the damage, but Monty still has 5 life and a Swords to Plowshares left. The only remaining card you have that can finish Monty off is the Soul Burn. The problem is that Monty can pump up his Wall of Lava or his Folk of the Pines and gain 7 life with his Swords to Plowshares.

This is the point where I'd suggest just giving up. Like there's any way you're actually going to pull this off.

Anyway, the problem with Soul Burn is that you only have enough black and red mana to do 8 damage (assuming you cast it next turn, after you've drawn and played the snow-covered mountain). Luckily, you have at your disposal a way to get some extra mana—Songs of the Damned. But with only one creature in your graveyard, this spell won't get you much. Therefore, you are going to need to come up with a way to get the rest of your creatures to the graveyard. The answer, it turns out, is sitting in your hand.

- 7) TAP THREE ISLANDS AND ONE MOUNTAIN TO ADD THREE BLUE (ALL USED AS COLORLESS) AND ONE RED MANA TO YOUR MANA POOL.
- 8) Use one red and three colorless mana to cast Total War.
- 9) DECLARE THE END OF YOUR TURN.

During Monty's turn:

10) As you know from the previous games, there is nothing Monty can do to deal 20 points of damage from his hand. If he attacks with his creatures, you can just block with your creatures. So Monty does nothing on his turn.

During your second turn:

- 11) Draw the snow-covered mountain.
- 12) PLAY THE SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAIN.

- 13) DECLARE AN ATTACK BUT CHOOSE TO ATTACK WITH NO CREATURES. This will cause Total War to destroy all of your creatures.
- 14) TAP FOUR SWAMPS, TWO PLAINS, AND FIVE SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINS TO ADD FOUR BLACK, TWO WHITE (BOTH USED AS COLORLESS), AND FIVE RED MANA TO YOUR MANA POOL.
- 15) Use one black mana to cast Songs of the Damned. THIS WILL ADD SIX BLACK MANA (ONE FOR EACH CREATURE IN YOUR GRAVEYARD) TO YOUR MANA POOL.

Now that you have sufficient mana, you can Soul Burn to your heart's content.

- 16) Use one black mana and two colorless mana to CAST SOUL BURN. THEN USE THE EIGHT BLACK MANA AND FIVE RED MANA TO DO 13 POINTS OF DAMAGE (GAINING 8 LIFE FOR THE BLACK MANA SPENT).
- 17) MONTY CAN USE HIS SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES ON HIS WALL OF LAVA OR HIS FOLK OF THE PINES. HE CAN PUMP UP EITHER CREATURE TO GIVE HIMSELF 7 MORE LIFE. (This assumes he didn't use Swords to Plowshares in step 6, in which case you do all your damage now and none of it earlier.) You only get five black mana instead of six from the Songs of the Damned (remember that Swords to Plowshares removed your Goblin Ski Patrol from the game), but you can still Soul Burn for 12 damage, which is enough to defeat Monty.

This next puzzle is a bit harder, but I think we can crack it.

"ВУ ТНЕ ВООК"

(Puzzle published in Duelist #8, pp. 104-105) The goal of this puzzle is to defeat your opponent, Julia, this turn without dying yourself. The first thing you have to do is figure out the order in which you want to arrange the top four cards of your library. (You are in the final resolution of the Orcish Librarian's special ability.) Since it seems obvious that you need the forest, you are going to want to put it near the top. But as you also know that you are probably going to need more than one card (the Blood Lust sure looks appealing), you will want to use the Jalum Tome to allow you to do so.

UPKEEP PHASE:

1) PLACE THE FOUR CARDS DRAWN BY THE ORCISH LIBRARIAN IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER (STARTING FROM TOP OF THE LIBRARY): JALUM TOME, FOREST, BLOOD LUST, LURE.

DRAW PHASE:

2) DRAW JALUM TOME.

MAIN PHASE:

3) TAP MISHRA'S WORKSHOP, TWO URZA'S TOWERS, AND A MOUNTAIN TO ADD ONE RED AND NINE COLORLESS MANA (THREE OF WHICH CAN ONLY BE USED TO CAST ARTIFACTS) TO YOUR MANA POOL.

4) Use the three Mishra's Workshop mana to cast JALUM TOME.

Our next big problem is to figure out how to do the necessary damage to Julia. At 17 life, Julia is going to be tough to defeat. Also, as we have no way to do direct damage, we are going to have to use our creatures. After a quick glance, we see that only one creature has the potential to do the damage we need: the Craw Giant. The major problem is getting enough green mana to cast it. But if we look at our cards closely, we'll see that there are ways to get the Craw Giant into play other than casting it.

- 5) Use two colorless mana and tap Jalum Tome to DRAW AN EXTRA CARD. PICK UP THE FOREST AND THEN DISCARD THE CRAW GIANT.
- 6) PLAY THE FOREST.
- 7) TAP THE FOREST TO ADD ONE GREEN MANA TO YOUR MANA POOL.
- 8) Use three colorless mana TO TAP THE CANDELABRA OF TAWNOS AND UNTAP THE TWO URZA'S TOWERS AND THE FOREST.
- 9) TAP THE FOREST TO ADD ONE GREEN MANA TO YOUR MANA POOL.
- 10) USE TWO GREEN AND ONE COLORLESS MANA TO CAST REINCARNATION ON THE ORCISH LIBRARIAN.

Freyalise Supplicant

becomes important because we need a way to send a creature to the graveyard in order to trigger the Reincarnation.

11) TAP THE FREYALISE SUPPLICANT AND SACRIFICE THE ORCISH LIBRARIAN TO DO 0 POINTS OF DAMAGE TO JULIA. WHEN THE LIBRARIAN GOES TO THE GRAVEYARD, THE REINCARNATION ALLOWS YOU TO PUT THE CRAW GIANT INTO PLAY.

Our next problem is that we need the Elder Druid to untap two different things (Julia's Phantasmal Forces and our own Jalum Tome). Luckily, there is another card in our hand that will allow us to do both if we can manage it correctly.

- 12) Use one red mana to put Eternal Warrior on ELDER DRUID.
- 13) DECLARE YOUR ATTACK.

COMBAT PHASE:

14) DECLARE YOUR CRAW GIANT AND ELDER DRUID AS ATTACKERS.

- 15) As a fast effect after attackers are declared, tap the three Urza's Towers, Urza's Mine, Urza's Power Plant, and mountain to add one red and thirteen colorless mana to your mana pool.
- 16) TAP ORCISH LUMBERJACK AND SACRIFICE A FOREST TO ADD TWO GREEN MANA AND ONE RED MANA TO YOUR MANA POOL.
- 17) Use one green and three colorless mana and tap Elder Druid to untap Julia's Phantasmal Forces.

Melee is important here, as we need to ensure that all the creatures block the Craw Giant. Also, it allows us to untap the Elder Druid and get an extra use of its ability.

- 18) Use one red and four colorless mana to cast Melee. Use Melee to force all five of Julia's creatures (Ghost Hounds, Wall of Vapor, Cemetery Gate, Phantom Monster, and Phantasmal Forces) to block your Craw Giant. With rampage: 2, this will make the Craw Giant a 14/12 creature until the end of the turn. As you have declared no blockers for your Elder Druid, it untaps and is treated as if it never attacked.
- 19) Use one green and three colorless mana and tap Elder Druid to untap Jalum Tome.
- 20) Use two colorless mana and tap Jalum Tome to draw a card. Pick up the Blood Lust and then discard Aggression.
- 21) Use one red and one colorless mana to cast Blood Lust on the Craw Giant. It is now an 18/8 creature until the end of the turn.
- 22) Choose to have your Craw Giant trample over Julia's Phantasmal Forces. Since the Forces has a toughness of 1, this allows the Craw Giant to do 17 points of damage, defeating Julia.

Wow, that was quite amazing. Well, thanks for taking the time to read our column. We look forward to seeing you next issue.

Very cute. We haven't done all the puzzles yet. You're not going to give them all the answers, are you? This is an answer column.

Only if you make it one.

"TO ERR IS HUMAN"

(Puzzle published in Duelist #8, p. 106)
The goal of the final puzzle is to find all the "mistakes" on the cards. These mistakes are listed below:

Ali Baba

- 1) The casting cost should be 2
- 2) The card type should be "Summon Ali Baba"
- 3) There should be no expansion symbol on the card

Ayesha Tanaka

- 1) The casting cost should be ** 6 6
- 2) The card type should be "Summon Legend"
- 3) "Banding" is missing from the text box

Diabolic Machine

- 1) The card type should be "Artifact Creature"
- 2) The artist should be Anson Maddocks
- 3) The Machine's power and toughness should be 4/4

Fortified Area

- 1) The casting cost should be 1 **
- 2) There should be no expansion symbol
- 3) The text should read "All walls you control gain banding and get +1/+0"

Giant Slug

- 1) The expansion symbol should be the Legends symbol
- 2) The activation cost should be 5
- 3) The Slug's power and toughness should be 1/1

Kismet

- 1) The text should read "all of target player's"
- 2) The artist should be Kaja Foglio

Metamorphosis

- 1) The card type should be "Sorcery"
- 2) The expansion symbol should be the Legends symbol
- 3) The text should read "casting cost plus one"

Mishra's Factory

- 1) The artwork should be the "fall" Mishra's Factory
- 2) The text box should contain the line "c: Add one colorless mana to your mana pool"
- 3) The artists should be Kaja & Phil Foglio

Personal Incarnation

- 1) The casting cost should be 3 ***
- 2) The card type should be "Summon Avatar"
- 3) The text box should refer to the "owner," not "controller"
- 4) The text box should read "rounding up the loss"

Sindbad

- 1) The title and card type should be spelled "Sindbad"
- 2) The casting cost should be 1 6
- 3) There should be no expansion symbol
- 4) Sindbad's power and toughness should be 1/1

Tawnos's Wand

- 1) The activation cost should be 2, c
- 2) The text box should not read "by all creatures except artifact creatures" (this wording was on the *Antiquities* version but was removed from the *Fourth Edition* version)
- 3) There shouldn't be any flavor text; the text shown is adapted from Tawnos's Weaponry.

Urza's Tower

- 1) The artwork is incorrect; the art shown is from Urza's Mine.
- 2) The flavor text should read "Urza always put Tocasia's lesson on resource-gathering to effective use" (the quote used is from Urza's Power Plant)

This time we really are done. So, until next issue, may your cards flow freely and may your brain not cramp.

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Each member of the team has an extensive background in retail management and knows the inside track on running a "savvy" business:

Jillian Sutter is the rep for the West Coast and Australia. After eight years of mass-market retail experience, she is very happy to work for a company that doesn't mind that she is the office Perkygoth, looks just like Death from the Sandman comics, or has a stuffed, fanged bunny on her desk. Having played roleplaying games and collected comics for years, she has a strong understanding of the hobby/ game industry.

Wendy Wallace is our newest Merchant Relations representative, but her eight years of experience at most levels of retail in the comic/gaming industry makes her the veteran of the team. She is both a member (and former Retailer

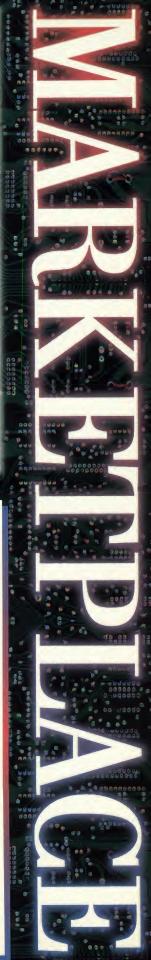
Division Secretary) of GAMA (the Game Manufacturers Association) and a Japanese anime junkie. Having escaped from the Midwest and its summers, she is now providing support for the Midwest and Mountain regions—from Louisiana to Idaho. Tap into her sympathetic background!

Shane DeFreest, the Southeast Merchant Relations representative, is a notorious beach bum who wanted the Southeast specifically because any convention in the region most likely would be close to the beaches. He hasn't been to a con in the sun yet. He spent three years managing a comic book shop which did little good for his sun-drenched psyche. He still mentally "lives" in 1987 and is avidly awaiting the return of Big Hair and Glam Rock.

Adrian Swartout is the acting Director of Merchant Relations, as well as the representative for the Great Lakes region. Her previous experience as a manager and buyer for a retail chain gives her a solid background for dealing with retailer concerns. She stresses integrity in her dealings with retailers, and she prides herself on handling difficult situations. Adrian has been known to hustle volleyball games and loves to assault mountain bike trails at high speeds.

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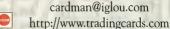
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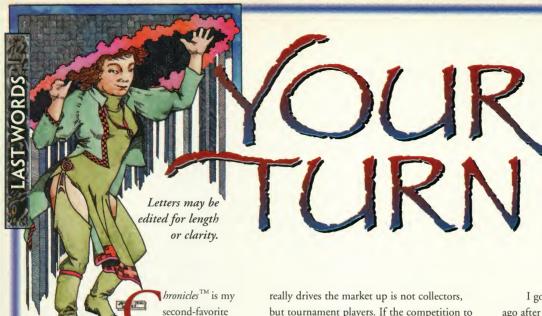


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Magic expansion, right after *Homelands* [™]. I'm glad Wizards of the Coast is ensuring that everyone can get previously out-of-print cards and wish they would go further (though I doubt we'll see the return of the Moxes or Juzám Djinn anytime soon). I'm in Magic strictly for fun. I don't spend huge amounts of money on cards, and I rarely spend over \$5 on a single. *Chronicles* allows me to get cards from the expansions I missed without spending a fortune.

In "Your Turn," *Duelist* #8, Daniel Walls suggested that *Chronicles* will have a negative impact on the collector market, but I have to disagree. There is still demand for Alpha, Beta, and *Unlimited*, despite most of the cards being in *Fourth Edition*. If someone really wants a full set of the Elder Dragons from *Legends*, the Elder Dragons being in *Chronicles* isn't going to deter them. They may even be happy, as the Elder Dragons being in *Chronicles* might mean lower prices for the *Legends* set. For people like me, who just want a full set of the Elder Dragons and couldn't care less if they were black border or white border, *Chronicles* is a godsend.

For those people who were hoping to make a quick buck or possibly finance their kids' (or their own) college education by speculating on **Magic**, hopefully *Chronicles* (and to a lesser extent, *Fourth Edition*), will keep them from doing to the TCG market what they did to the sports-card and comic-book markets.

—Scott Steubing Houston, TX

am writing in response to the letter by Daniel Walls in *Duelist* #8. He complains that reprinting cards is not the solution and compares **Magic** cards to baseball cards. **Magic** cards are not baseball cards, and what

but tournament players. If the competition to win were not so high, cards like the Moxes would not be sold for \$150 a pop. Reprinting is common among popular comic books, and, like Chronicles, distinctions are made between the original and the reprint. Cards like the Moxes and the Black Lotus, as well as Time Walk and Ancestral Recall, are some of the strongest, most versatile, and most abusable cards ever made. They're also impossible to get, aside from trading immense material or shelling out ridiculous prices. Yet to be competitive in the tournament realm, you need these cards. You need these cards because if you don't have them, your start will be too slow to win. I realize that there are many cards in the recent sets that prepare a good defense for these power cards, but is that the game that all latecomers have to face, one of constantly backing down from either the oldtimers or the wealthy? The playing field should be leveled so that the stores stop abusing players with outright abusive prices. Since the cards are restricted, why not give people a chance to get them? Re-release the Unlimited run minus Time Vault. If the cards are that dangerous to the game and too powerful to rerelease, then why not ban them?

> —Dorian Newcomb Baltimore, MD

recently received a flier for a **Magic** tournament and would like to express some concerns. First of all, I am a little disturbed with the idea of a cash prize for any type of **Magic** tournament that includes amateur players. In addition, it seems that the cost of participating in a tournament is escalating. My question is whether it is necessary to offer a prize of cards, boxes of boosters, or cash for winning a tournament.

DUFLIST

I got hooked on **Magic** about two years ago after my son and daughter started playing. I enjoy all of the aspects of **Magic**, and I have the suitcase to prove it, but I especially enjoy playing. I do not desire cash, boxes of cards, or a Black Lotus if I win. I enjoy **Magic** just for the enjoyment of playing, and I think there may be a few others who feel the same. I recently placed second in a local "tournament" and received \$10-worth of store credit and a ribbon. I cannot remember what cards I got with the credit, but the ribbon occupies a prominent place in my study. I am very proud of that simple little ribbon.

I could be wrong, but from what I've observed at tournaments, it's not the prize that draws players; it's the competition! The chance to test one's deck-building and playing skills with players outside one's own circle is the basis for a tournament; the prize is incidental.

My impression is that people get into Magic, and stay, because it's enjoyable to collect, trade, and play. The individual who wins a Type I tournament probably already has a set of the Moxes and a Black Lotus. Another set does him little good except for resale. A box of boosters just means he needs a bigger suitcase. The cost the promoter must charge to offer these prizes keeps a lot of people, especially the younger players, out of a tournament. It also discourages others who lack the playing experience necessary to have a reasonable chance for success. This in turn denies them an opportunity to gain experience. A total cost of \$17 to enter a tournament is a rather expensive experience, especially if you're eliminated in the first round. Why do most promoters feel it is necessary to offer big prizes to attract players? I think most will attend because it's an opportunity to play. I doubt there is any player who continues to play Magic solely to win big prizes.

It would be interesting to find out what Magic players really want in a tournament. Are

Background by Amy Weber Spot illustration by Margaret Organ-Kean most drawn by big prizes (with the associated big fees), or do they primarily attend because it is an opportunity to compete? They may be paying high fees because it's the only game in town. The promoters may not realize that it is not necessary to offer Moxes as prizes to get people to attend. It seems to me that most individuals compete, whether in **Magic** or sports, not for the material reward, but for the experience, recognition, and personal achievement.

—Tom Van Orden Arlington, TX

am writing to you to applaud Jason G. Speck's letter in "Your Turn" of Duelist #8. Although I am not a literature student, I have also noted that the delightful quotations from literature have diminished in favor of created quotes from Dominia's inhabitants. These quotes, however, don't live up to their more earthly counterparts. For example, in Duelist #7, you described creating the flavor text for Baron Sengir, and it ended up reading, "Beast. Defiler. The source of all my pain."—Ihsan's Shade. With such flavor text, we don't feel awe or terror, as we do with a quote from Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" on Will-O'-The-Wisp. Shakespeare is also wonderful for evoking feeling. "A Wizards of the Coast Index" in Duelist #8 says The Bard is quoted nine times; with a thousand cards in print, that's not much.

—Robin Hoeher rohogedg@sp.zrz.tuberlin.de

RESPONSE TO LAST ISSUE'S "AT ISSUE": SIMULTANEOUS ACTIVATIONS

Last issue, Tom Wylie asked for reader feedback on powering an ability more than once in a single activation in order to generate the effect multiple times. For example, in a single activation, should players be allowed to activate Pestilence three times for 1 damage each, or just once for 3 damage? Here are some readers' ideas, along with Tom's responses.

s long as a player can activate his Circle of Protection: Black as many times as he wants per turn, his opponent should be able to activate his Pestilence multiple times as well. If simultaneous activation is too confusing for new players, perhaps it's time Magic offered optional, simplified rules for beginners.

—Scott Steubing KryptoPup@aol.com Houston, TX

First, to be clear: the proposal is not to stop people from reusing abilities entirely, just to not allow them to sink multiples of the cost into the effect at once. So you could still power up Pestilence for A, then for A, and then for another But you wouldn't be able to power it up for A all at once. Also, the confusion is not limited to new players. Several people who are generally knowledgeable about the rules aren't sure what happens when you pump Elemental Augury many times at once, for example. It just isn't clear

to people that spending 6 on it all at once does not let you look at six cards of the library.

since Circles prevent all damage against you from one source, one activation of the Circle should suffice to prevent all damage from one source during a damage-prevention phase. Then, even without multiple activation, Pestilence and Circle of Protection: Black would work by responding to each activation of Pestilence with another. All the damage would wait until the batch resolved and would then be preventable with a single Circle activation, since all the damage was from the same source.

So there's my vote. If we can interpret the Circles the way I suggest, then I vote for getting rid of multiple activation. Otherwise, it should be kept. Or better yet, you could devise a notation for X mana of a specific color. Then in fifth edition, you could use that notation for effects you want to be pumpable. Drain Life comes to mind.

—Hymen Rosen hymie@marks.jyacc.com

It seems clear that certain abilities are made much more useful if you can power them up all at once. But remember that the issue here is the complexity of the game, and whether this rule is worth all the confusion about it. If we did stop allowing people to sink multiples of a cost into an ability, we could easily tweak abilities such as Pestilence's, where the functionality seems important.

THIS ISSUE'S "AT ISSUE": BANNED AND RESTRICTED LISTS by Tom Wylie

nce upon a time, the Duelists'
Convocation was born. It had
rules for deck construction,
including Banned and Restricted Lists that
grew, shrank, and then grew again.
Eventually it split into two tournament formats: the original (Type I) and the new
(Type II). The new format also had a
Restricted and Banned List, which was the
intersection of the lists for Type I and the
cards allowed in Type II. And all was well.

Or was it? Soon after the split, rumblings began, for not all felt that the restricted or banned cards in Type II needed to be. For example, Feldon's Cane was restricted in Type I because it allows you to recycle other restricted cards, but with only a handful of

restricted cards in Type I, it's nowhere near as much of a danger. And recently, Black Vise was restricted because of its dominance of Type II. But it is not at all clear that it needs to be banned in Type I, where it's easier to wriggle out from its grasp and where it becomes more of a question of what type of deck you're building than whether you're building a deck in the first place.

It's clear that if and when the Convocation adds new tournament formats (e.g., grand melee), differing Banned and Restricted Lists will be needed. But should there be different lists for Types I and II now? And if so, which cards get left off of which lists?

Send your feedback to: At Issue, c/o The Duelist, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057; or email your responses to: duelist@wizards.com



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THROAT WOLF

A REPORTER'S JOURNAL By Mike Selinker

the action of their earlie howling their kind across the frozen place and attack oppose an attack oppose their kinds their kinds attack oppose their Unit of
Oct. 11: Got the assignment from *The Duelist* today. This might be the big one. If I track this down, to heck with *The Duelist*; I'm pitching it to the Wall Street Bloody Journal. This story's got

Pulitzer written all over it. Look out, world: I'm hunting Throat Wolf.

Oct. 14: Spoke to *Duelist* puzzlist Mark Rosewater. The basic facts I've pieced together: Some Magic fans on the Web firmly believe that in 1993's Alpha printing of Magic: The Gathering®, a unique page of 121 cards was sent to Carta Mundi, the plant in Belgium where Magic is printed. The sheet apparently never got reproduced. Each of the 121 cards bore an illustration of something called a "Throat Wolf." Each

referred to the creature's having "First strike," although some had "Double first strike" and even "Firstest strike." Must find out what these mean.

Oct. 17: Spoke to Wizards R&D team member Tom Wylie. Said that "Firstest strike" was "one step faster than firster strike." Now I understand. Must keep hunting.

Oct. 19: Surfed the Web today. Learned of a new problem: the *Legends*™ Throat Wolf. There are 121 more Throat Wolves, each a unique legend, each also unreproduced. New abilities for each; always the "First strike" variant, though. One die-hard female player named "SerratedAngel" claimed to have *two* Throat Wolves, one with the words "Banding, banjoing, and double first strike," and another with "♠, ②♠♠: Firstest and lastest strike." Wouldn't show them to me.

Oct. 22: Tried to track down Richard Garfield, creator of Magic. Can't find him. Note to self: 242 unique cards means 242 unique pieces of art. Must find an artist. Starting to sleep less. Need another latté.

Oct. 23: Forgot to go home last night. Fourteen artists, fourteen "no comments." Pete Venters just laughed. You'd think they'd be proud of having illustrated a unique card. Conspiracy? Maybe all the way up to *The Duelist*. Nah. That's just paranoid, right? *Right*?

Oct. 27: Stole an early draft of the *Homelands* expansion, which clearly indicates the existence of a Throat Wolf card. "32, Summon Wolf, First strike, ©: Target Dwarf gains first strike and gets +2/+0 until end of turn. If that Dwarf leaves play this turn, bury Throat Wolf." Bought one off a kid at

Games & Gizmos for seventy-five bucks; remember to note on *Duelist* expense account. Took it to my card authentifier, Crazy Bruno. Using high-power magnifiers, he discovered that the word "Throat" had been replaced in both cases with the word "Heart."
Conspiracy theory looking more likely.

Oct. 29: Breakthrough! Met my informant in a parking garage in Tukwila. Goes by the name of "Deep Throat Wolf." He gave me a card and disappeared into the night rain. Card has a white background and an illo of wolves munching a ruminant's carcass. First strike, of course. Words "Throat Wolf" hand-

written across the top and the initials "R^G" in the corner. Must get it analyzed.

Must remember to eat this week. No Garfield yet.

Oct. 30: Really bad mood today. Crazy Bruno brought in five hundred dollars' worth of handwriting experts, who scoped my informant's card. Handwriting experts baffled as to why there would be *any* handwriting on an official card and pointed to the words "Tundra Wolves" crossed out below handwritten Throat Wolf." Put experts on expense report.

Nov. 9: Big brouhaha on CompuServe today. Wizards' Wylie replied to "Ali From Cairo,

Illinois," claiming there were no Throat Wolves but was cut off mid-sentence. He did not return to the discussion. Conspiracy theory looking very likely. Suspect I'm being followed.

Nov. 15: Checked out of hospital today. Shouldn't have wrapped the convertible around that tree. Doctor said blackouts are direct result of not sleeping. Could swear the brakes failed. Can't think about that now. Convertible goes on expense report.

Nov. 18: Found Richard Garfield! Discovered through careful detective work and bribery that he sits eleven feet from my desk. Tried to pin him, but he just smiled and autographed an Aspect of Wolf for me. Nailed him, though: His "R^G" signature matches the one given to me by Deep Throat Wolf! Garfield bears watching.

Nov. 19: Thrown off of Garfield's property. Local police very businesslike. Bail goes on expense report. Note for future investigations: Rose bushes are very pointy.

Nov. 21: Deadline tomorrow. The receptionist says I look "gaunt." The shadows are definitely moving. What to do?

Nov. 22: Thanksgiving tomorrow. Kathryn's on my case. Must turn something into *Duelist* other than expense report. This'll have to do. Got a new assignment today: Find the Lizard Leaper and the Clockwork Doppelganger. Here we go again.

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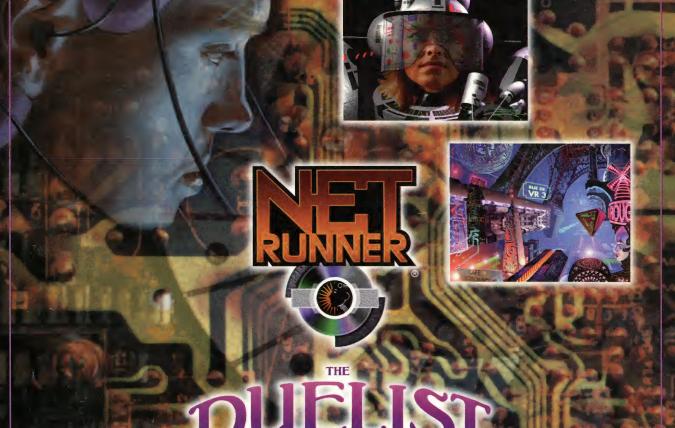


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